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ABSTRACT

This publication is the product of a college course which focused on the general concept of race and ethnicity in films from a cross-national comparative perspective. The authors hope that the booklet will be useful to teachers who present courses on film and history, for those who use film in their general history courses, and for those who teach courses on comparative race and ethnicity. Students analyze films focusing on the historical experiences of Blacks, American Indians, and white ethnics in the United States and Latin America. These films provided examples of how filmmakers in the two areas viewed their nations' experiences including ethnic groups and interethnic relations. In addition the students learned how to analyze films as historical evidence and how to utilize and evaluate this evidence. Books and lectures provided students with historical background about the countries and themes. The booklet contains an introductory essay on the development of the authors' film and history pedagogy, issues in teaching about race and ethnicity, the structure of the course and the strengths and weaknesses of student film analyses. The bulk of the booklet contains fourteen student film analyses that were written during the course. (Author/RM)

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RACE AND ETHNICITY IN THE HISTORY OF THE AMERICAS: A FILMIC APPROACH

By

Carlos E. Cortés

Leon G. Campbell

LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM

FILM SERIES NO. 4

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This publication is a product of the course, "Race and Ethnicity in the History of the Americas: A Filmic Approach," which was given during the Spring quarter, 1979, by Professors Carlos E. Cortés and Leon G. Campbell of the Department of History, University of California, Riverside, with the assistance of Susan Lasater, History Department secretary. The course and this publication were supported by a University of California Undergraduate Instructional Improvement Grant. This booklet contains an introductory essay on the development of our film-and-history pedagogy, issues in teaching about race and ethnicity, the structure of our course, and the strengths and weaknesses of student film analyses. In addition, the booklet includes fourteen student essays which were written during the course. It is our hope that this publication will prove useful for teachers who present courses on film and history, for those who use films in their general history courses, and for those who teach courses on comparative race and ethnicity.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF RACE AND ETHNICITY THROUGH FILM

By Carlos E. Cortés and Leon G. Campbell

As described in a series of manuals published since 1975, we have developed a methodology for using film as a means to teach history.[1] By now film is commonplace as a teaching tool in the university classroom, and it hardly seems necessary to debate its value as a form of historical evidence. Studies of U.S. cultural history have demonstrated the ways in which the U.S. motion picture industry and film themes have influenced and been influenced by the social and cultural milieu of the periods in which they were made.[2] Similar sorts of observations can be made for other film industries, such as those in Latin America. In **Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies**, Robert Sklar contended that twentieth-century American mass culture, notably lifestlyes, morality, and even class consciousness, were "movie-made," at least up until World War II, when the industry was forced into a more conservative mold by groups determined to preserve the status quo in a time of enormous social change.[3] We explored the impact of films on Latin American society in our course, "Film as Revolutionary Weapon," and in a recent article on the Bolivian filmmaker, Jorge Sanjinés.[4]

Since spring 1975, we have offered five film-and-history courses here at the University of California, Riverside. In our first course, "Latin America: A Film Survey," we screened a series of Latin American feature and documentary films dealing with that area and asked students to evaluate them as historical documents through structured readings, class discussions, and critical papers. At that time we established three conceptual bases which we felt teachers and students needed to grasp in order to effectively analyze and evaluate films as historical evidence. Briefly restated, these are: (1) that **all** films are subjective interpretations of "reality" and must be used with caution; (2) that films are dynamic forms, with words, sounds, and images acting independently to deliver messages to the viewing audience, which is usually "filmically illiterate" and unaware of the juxtaposition of these sensory transmissions; and (3) that viewers must be aware of the impact of their own predispositions in evaluating films, since these can greatly facilitate (or hinder) acceptance of the messages contained in any film.

In 1976 we presented "The Feature Film as Historical Source: A Study of Human Dilemmas." In this course our focus was broadened from one geographical area to a global, cross-cultural comparative treatment of two universal dilemmas: economic dislocation and human migration; and the conflict between law and justice. To do this we used a series of films dealing with these two themes and asked students to prepare two major critical papers, one on each theme, based on their readings, class discussions, and the films themselves. We also spent far greater time developing in the students a critical awareness of film technology as well as providing them with a clearer understanding of the historical context in which the films were made. Since the films dealt with subjects as disparate as pre-Nazi Germany, Gandhian India, the Napoleonic Wars, the United States depression of the 1930s, the backlands of northeastern Brazil, and World War I, specialists on these areas suggested readings and participated in class discussions following the showing of each film.

In 1977, in our course, "Film as Revolutionary Weapon," we emphasized one genre – the "revolutionary" film designed to produce forms of political action including terrorism – as it had developed in six Latin American countries during the 1960s and 1970s. In this course we utilized a variety of film types ranging from government-sponsored documentaries to illegal underground films. Emphasis was placed on readings and lectures that helped provide historical background for understanding the problems facing these countries and the specific solutions proposed by opponents and supporters of the incumbent regimes. Students were required to write two critical essays placing the films and the filmmakers in their appropriate cultural, societal, and historical contexts and defining their ideas about the filmic messages and goals of the producers. Students were asked to opine about the effectiveness of each film's treatment of the themes (e.g. imperialism, dependency, the class system, governmental oppression, revolution), which were also dealt with in readings and lectures. We were careful not to define revolutionary films, but instead asked students on the final examination to formulate their own definitions based on the course experience and to explain their rationale in arriving at such a definition. This approach was also consistent with our goals of provoking independent student thought and increasing students analytical abilities.

In 1978 we offered a fourth course, "Latin American Frontiers: A Media Approach." Its purpose was to examine various manifestations of the concept of frontier – as a territorial entity, as an intergroup boundary, and as a psychological barrier. Students read works dealing with the nature of frontiers and frontier societies, the topic of frontier experiences, and the impact of different types of frontiers on individuals and groups. The dynamics of frontiers, with their dualistic aspects (one society advancing, another retreating), were also considered. Again, the concept of frontiers was treated in a multi-national manner in the Americas, including Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, the Amazon Basin region, the U.S. Southwest, and Spanish California as examples, and over time from pre-Columbian days to the present.

Our most recent course, "Race and Ethnicity in the History of the Americas: A Filmic Approach," in the spring of 1979, involved the analysis of selected filmic treatments of the subjects of race relations and ethnic experiences in the Americas. The films chosen for screening focused on the historical experiences of blacks, Native Americans, and white ethnics in the United States and Latin America. These films provided examples of how filmmakers in the two areas viewed their nations' experiences, including ethnic groups and interethnic relations. Beyond this, we also addressed some of the theoretical and conceptual questions of how to analyze films as historical evidence as well as methodological questions of how to teach students to utilize and evaluate this evidence. These were problems with which we had attempted to deal in our four previous film-and-history courses.[5] As we constantly reevaluate and modify our film-and-history pedagogy, we are better prepared to help students comprehend the dangers inherent in viewing films as "objective forms of reality"[6] and to help students develop their capacity to evaluate films as sociohistorical documents.

Students viewing films on emotional subjects, such as race and interethnic relations, have a strong tendency either to fall into what we have referred to as the "advocate approach," that is, to lavish praise on a film because it happens to correspond to their own beliefs, or, alternatively, to adopt a "nihilistic approach," rejecting a film as "unreal" simply because it challenges their viewpoint. To some degree the former position is buttressed by the tendency of many to view motion

pictures as representations or at least reflections of "fact" or "reality." We have been careful to deal with this tendency in the classroom by challenging students to view all films as interpretations and by examining the filmmaker's options for manipulating content, meaning, and style. This is equally true for the newsreel or documentary form of the genre as for the feature film.

In order to counteract the difficulties posed by the power of film and by the sometimes passionate views of filmmakers, we have developed a series of readings and lectures that attempt to explain filmmaking and filmic techniques. In addition, through books and lectures we provide students with a degree of historical background about the countries and themes (e.g. slavery, the Cuban Revolution, race and class), so that the films do not constitute their only available "reality." At the same time we emphasize that bias and selectivity of factual evidence are also inherent in written history and attempt to develop in students a healthy skepticism toward all forms of evidence. Once the concept of filmic and printed source objectivity is treated, we are better able to deal more openly and analytically with ideas, attitudes, and values developed in films and their contribution to a historical understanding of the period or theme under consideration.

The key to counterbalancing the inevitable student tendency to accept films as "real" or "objective" views of a subject or situation is to continually impress upon them that the camera is controlled by human beings who have chosen to make the film for a variety of purposes. Moreover, as Joan Didion has astutely observed about Hollywood, social problems are frequently seen as scenarios whereby key scenes are joined together to produce a particular end. As Didion puts it, things "happen" in motion pictures; there is always a resolution and a strong cause-effect dramatic line. To perceive the world in these terms is to assume an ending for every social scenario.[7] Yet when students are forewarned and equipped to deal with this powerful and influential medium, they also can benefit greatly from debating and analyzing messages contained in films and reflecting on the social conditions that affected the making of the films in the first place. In this way films can serve as historical evidence and benefit the teaching of history irrespective of the imaginative nature of their content.

Teaching about Race and Ethnicity

Since the mid-1960s and the increase in momentum of the various ethnic civil rights movements, race and ethnicity have become hot topics—in the press, in schools, and, of course, in films. In the past decade, a flood of "ethnic films" has hit the market. These films can be loosely placed into three basic categories. First are the consciously "ethnic films" which focus almost exclusively on the experience of a single ethnic group (although other groups may be brought in for contrast and counterpoint). Examples of such films are ***The Godfather***, ***Boulevard Nights***, ***The Principal Enemy***, ***Sounder***, ***Goodbye Columbus***, and ***Cheyenne Autumn***. Second are those films which use ethnicity as an important factor in plot and characterization, but do not purport to examine a particular ethnic experience. Among these are such films as ***The Big Fix***, ***Blue Collar***, and ***The Outlaw Josie Wales***. In some of these films, such as ***Love at First Bite*** and ***The End***, traditional ethnic stereotypes themselves become the subject for caricature, reflecting filmmakers' beliefs that audiences are already well equipped with and aware of stereotypes, which can then be used as the basis for humor about the stereotype. Finally, there is the third category of films in which ethnicity is dealt with in passing but is not

intrinsic to the plot, as in *Corvette Summer* and *The Swimmer*.

The increasing pervasiveness of race and ethnicity as motion picture themes and the growing recognition that race and ethnicity have always been significant, if not always recognized, components of U.S. motion pictures have led to numerous books and articles dealing with different ethnic groups in U.S. films. Among such books are Randall M. Miller's *The Kaleidoscopic Lens: Ethnic Images in American Film*, Allen L. Woll's *The Latin Image in American Film*, Thomas Cripps' *Slow Fade to Black: The Negro in American Film, 1900-1942*, Ralph E. and Natasha A. Friar's *The Only Good Indian...The Hollywood Gospel*, Eugene Franklin Wong's *On Visual Media Racism: Asians in the American Motion Pictures*, and Donald Bogle's *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mamies & Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films*.[8]

Most of these books emphasize three themes – the way in which individual groups have been depicted in American motion pictures, the historical causes for such depictions, and the participation of persons of different ethnic backgrounds in the motion picture industry. In contrast, our course focused on the general concept of race and ethnicity in films from a cross-national comparative perspective.

In presenting this course, we had to deal with, among other issues, those general problems faced by all persons who teach about race and ethnicity, whether introducing it at the kindergarten level or grappling with it in a graduate seminar. Space does not permit a full-scale examination of the many issues that have been generated through the growth of ethnic studies and multicultural education.[9] However, the following four examples should give a sense of the issues raised by the study of race and ethnicity.

(1) The Concepts of Race and Ethnicity

Race and ethnicity are themselves complex concepts, with significant cross-national differences. In the United States, a relatively rigid, artificial, and categorical system of "racial" classifications has developed. However, the conceptual weaknesses of the traditional U.S. racial classification system are becoming increasingly apparent with the growth of the "racially-mixed" Latino population, the growing frequency of interracial marriages, and the spreading recognition of race mixture throughout U.S. history. More and more Americans (in this case, meaning residents of the United States, rather than in the larger hemispheric context) simply do not fit neatly into a single racial category.

In contrast, for centuries most other nations in the Americas have come to grips with the reality of racial mixture. As far back as the sixteenth century in the Spanish and Portuguese colonies of the Americas, residents were not being rigidly categorized in "pure" racial categories, but rather according to the nature of their racial mixtures. Even more perplexing for U.S. students who study race in the Americas is the fact that "racial" categories and personal identities throughout most of Latin America are not simply defined by the traditional U.S. racial criteria of physical appearance and bloodlines. Rather, such factors as dress, region, language, place of residence, wealth, occupation, and education helped to "define" a person's race. In other words, where racial categorization in the U.S. essentially reflects biological heritage and physical appearance, racial categorization in Latin America reflects a broad spectrum of influencing factors. Students, particularly U.S. students, often have great difficulty dealing with this reality due to the way that persons in the United States are taught to view the concept of race.

But if race is difficult to grasp as a concept, it is a cup of tea compared to ethnicity. Even in the United States, there is little scholarly agreement as to the precise meaning or inclusiveness of the term, ethnicity. Most scholars recognize that ethnicity reflects such factors as place of birth, heritage, language, values, ways of life, religion, culture, and race, although not all of these factors necessarily play a role in characterizing any individual ethnic group.

Our approach was to avoid presenting a rigid definition of ethnicity and then forcing students to cram groups into that category or leave them out according to those definitional factors. Rather, we treated ethnicity as a dynamic, meaningful, and developing concept which reflects at least three factors: factual characteristics; the ways people in a particular group view themselves; and the way others may view them. Moreover, we see the significance of ethnicity not as a scholarly label or category, but as a continuous interplay of reality and perception of reality. For example, does it really make any difference if Appalachian Americans view themselves as a regional group, a cultural group, or an ethnic group? They may view themselves and others may view them as a group; whether or not the term "ethnicity" should be used is relatively irrelevant from the perspective of the humanistic analysis of experience. In other words, we use ethnicity as a dynamic organizing concept without firm and rigid boundaries rather than as a hard-line category for inclusion or exclusion of groups.

Moreover, the fineness of ethnic divisions may well reflect the eye of the beholder. White ethnics may be legitimately and validly interested in the experential and cultural differences among Polish Americans, Greek Americans, and Swedish Americans. However, in a real and operational sense, to black Americans they all may simply be viewed as whites and to Latinos they may simply be viewed as Anglos (meaning persons of white, non-Hispanic, European descent, not necessarily English descent). Moreover, a person may be "ethnic" in one circumstance and not another. Within the United States, for example, some people have strong identities of being ethnic Americans, while others view themselves as being just Americans, in other words, non-ethnic Americans. However, if all of these people find themselves in a foreign context, they all become part of a different type of ethnic group—Americans within that foreign nation. In short, the concepts of race and ethnicity themselves are challenging to any teacher attempting to deal with these topics.

(2) Intergroup Similarities and Differences

Much of the literature on race and ethnicity deals with the question of similarities and differences. Some curriculum materials and other writings about ethnic groups err by treating each group as being so entirely unique that it takes on the appearance of having no commonalities with the rest of humanity. The other extreme is the equally erroneous "we're all just Americans" approach. True, all Americans are Americans, but ethnicity, race, and culture are among the salient factors which provide the specialness of different people and groups of people, without obscuring their commonalities. Our approach in the teaching about ethnicity is to urge students to look constantly for human, group, and national commonalities, as well as the special aspects of the different ethnic experiences.

(3) Generalizations, Stereotypes, and Intragroup Diversity

When does a generalization become a stereotype? As with those fuzzy lines between racial and ethnic categorizations, there can be no hard and fast rule. Part

of studying about ethnicity and ethnic groups is learning generalizations about the prevailing characteristics and core experiences of those groups. However, an equally important part of the study of ethnicity is the recognition that those generalizations often become so much a rigid and internalized part of public and scholarly folklore that they achieve the status of stereotypes. In other words, stereotyping occurs when these generalizations are used with such sweeping, all-encompassing applicability to all individuals of a group that the existence and importance of intragroup diversity is ignored.

The key, particularly in a course such as ours, is working with students to maintain a continuous alertness to the fact that each group embodies a diversity of experiences, beliefs, and characteristics, even while there are powerful and linking intragroup commonalities. Moreover, in the teaching of ethnicity it is important to work for constant student awareness that group generalizations can be valid and extremely useful, but that without careful and sensitive use in their application to individuals, they can function as stereotypes.

(4) Multiple Perspectives

Ability to understand multiple perspectives is one of the key goals of teaching about race and ethnicity. Historical events, contemporary problems, and all societal phenomena can be viewed differently if approached from the perspectives of different racial, ethnic, national, and cultural groups (not to mention other groupings of people). The U.S.-Mexican War or the struggle over school desegregation, the building of railroads in the late nineteenth-century U.S. or the creation of the Panama Canal, the construction of freeways through crowded urban communities or the complexities of international trade, the westward movement of U.S. pioneers or the establishment of bank practices for granting or denying home loans in certain communities – all of these have multiple perspectives, including differing perspectives from the points of view of varying racial, ethnic, and national groups. Multiple perspectivism is an intrinsic and essential theme in teaching about ethnicity and served as an organizing principle for our entire course.

Literature on Ethnicity

Over the past decade there has been a major increase in the scholarly study of comparative ethnicity, slave systems, and race relations. One notable example is Carl Degler's provocative ***Neither Black nor White: Slavery and Race Relations in Brazil and the United States.***[10] Degler's book is an important starting point for the student seeking to know more about the subject of race and ethnicity in the Americas because the author compares cultural attitudes and social structures in the two nations as well as the differing historical development of their slave systems and their systems of interethnic relations. The subject of Latin American multiracialism, occasioned by centuries of miscegenation, is effectively dealt with by Swedish anthropologist and historian Magnus Morner in his book, ***Race Mixture in the History of Latin America,*** which also contains a comprehensive bibliography on the subject.[11]

Another important contribution of Degler's book is that it neatly summarizes the voluminous debate over the relative harshness of the North American and Latin American slave systems while at the same time challenging the interpretation that slavery in the latter area was more benign, as argued in Frank Tannenbaum's ***Slave and Citizen: The Negro in the Americas.***[12] Degler also contends that differences in the history of race relations in the United States and Latin America cannot be as-

certained merely through a comparison of their slave systems, but only through the comparative analysis of the histories of their societies and cultures. Therefore, the student of race relations in the Americas must inevitably attempt to develop an understanding of the social and cultural backgrounds of the United States and the various Latin American countries in order to comprehend the dynamics of their ethnic makeups.

For example, Charles Boxer's ***Race Relations in the Portuguese Colonial Empire, 1415-1825***[13] briefly points up some of the factors distinguishing the treatment of Indians and blacks in the empires of Spain, France, Holland, and England, a subject also dealt with Laura Foner's and Eugene Genovese's reader, ***Slavery in the New World: A Reader in Comparative History***, and Robert Brent Toplin's ***Slavery and Race Relations in Latin America.***[14] For insights into ***mestizaje*** (miscegenation) and ***Indianismo*** (glorification of the Indian past), see Morner's edited work. ***Race and Class in Latin America.***[15] The bibliographies in these works can introduce the reader to numerous other works available on race and ethnicity in individual Latin American nations and should be consulted as a starting point for those interested in further work on particular regions and ethnic groups.

Such scholars as anthropologist Marvin Harris in his book, ***Patterns of Race in the Americas***, emphasize the impact of economics on the development of race relations in the Americas.[16] Students seeking a better understanding of Latin American demographic, economic, and cultural patterns could start with such introductory works as Nicolás Sánchez-Albornoz' ***The Population of Latin America: A History***, Celso Furtado's ***Economic Development of Latin America: A Survey from Colonial Times to the Cuban Revolution***, and Germán Arciniegas' ***Latin America: A Cultural History.***[17] Anthropological and sociological viewpoints, respectively, on Latin America are provided by Eric R. Wolf's and Edward C. Hansen's ***The Human Condition in Latin America*** and Julius Rivera's ***Latin America: A Sociocultural Interpretation.***[18]

The 1960s and 1970s have also brought increased scholarly attention to ethnicity in the United States. One of that era's earliest introductory studies on the topic was Milton Gordon's ***Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion, and National Origins***, which reflected an assimilationist perspective.[19] A decade later came Andrew Greeley's pluralistically-oriented ***Ethnicity in the United States: A Preliminary Reconnaissance.***[20] Historical interpretations of the ethnic experience in the United States have fallen into three categories. Most extensive are the histories of individual ethnic groups. A second category consists of books which individually treat a series of ethnic groups (or grouping of ethnic groups), usually by devoting a chapter to each, such as ***The Ethnic Dimension in American Society*** by Salvatore J. LaGumina and Frank J. Cavaioli and ***The Ethnic Dimension in American History*** by James Stuart Olson.[21] Finally, there are the more synthetic efforts to weave the experiences of individual ethnic groups into a single historical fabric, such as ***To Seek America. A History of Ethnic Life in the United States*** by Maxine Seller and ***Natives and Strangers. Ethnic Groups and the Building of America*** by Leonard Dinnerstein, Roger L. Nichols, and David M. Reimers.[22]

Finally, in addition to studying ethnicity in individual nations and comparatively throughout the Americas, teachers and students should attempt to examine ethnicity in global context. Useful introductions are Michael Banton's ***Race Relations*** and Pierre L. van den Berghe's ***Race and Racism. A Comparative Perspective.***[23] ***Ethnicity: Theory and Experience***, edited by Nathan Glazer and Daniel Moynihan,

is a collection of often provocative essays both on ethnicity in general and about systems of ethnic relations in different nations around the world.[24] Finally, Cynthia Enloe's ***Ethnic Conflict and Political Development*** provides one of the most insightful global, cross-cultural studies of ethnicity yet published.[25]

Course Organization

History 114G, "Race and Ethnicity in the History of the Americas: A Filmic Approach," our fifth film-and-history course, was offered in spring, 1979. In it we focused on the filmic treatments of race relations and ethnic experiences in the Americas, using a multiethnic and cross-national comparative perspective. Because this was a large and potentially unmanageable subject, we decided to focus on three ethnic groups – blacks, Native Americans, and Italian white ethnics, groups which have been portrayed extensively in films and about which there is an abundant secondary historical literature. For our study of blacks in the Americas, we screened ***The Other Francisco*** (Cuba, 1975), a Castro-era feature film interpreting nineteenth-century Cuban slavery, and ***No Way Out*** (U.S.A., 1950), one of the early post-World War II U.S. films addressing black-white urban conflict. For Native Americans, we paired ***Blood of the Condor*** (Bolivia, 1969), which focuses on the plight of Andean Indians, with ***The Searchers*** (U.S.A., 1956), which treats white-Indian relations in the nineteenth-century U.S. West. For Italian white ethnics, we showed ***The Traitors*** (Argentina, 1973), concerning labor strife in that nation, and ***Mean Streets*** (U.S.A., 1973), about life in contemporary New York City's Little Italy.

As in previous film-and-history courses, we emphasized our traditional goals of helping students develop strategies for analyzing films as sociohistorical documents and providing them with practical exercises in interpreting these films through the writing of critical essays. In addition, we sought to deepen their understanding of the varying functions of race and ethnicity in the history of the Americas. Several cultural and societal definitions of race were examined, as well as the quite different experiences of ethnic groups in rural and urban settings in different nations.

As an introduction to the analysis of these themes, students read several books. Lee Bobker's ***Elements of Film*** provided an introduction to filmic language, methods, and techniques.[26] Allen Woll's ***The Latin Image in American Film*** introduced them to the treatment of one ethnic group in U.S. films.[27] In addition, for historical background, students read ***Natives and Strangers. Ethnic Groups and the Building of America*** by Leonard Dinnerstein, Roger Nichols, and David Reimers and ***Race and Class in Latin America***, edited by Magnus Morner.[28] These works both examined the complexity of race and ethnic relations and alerted students to the fact that ethnic stereotypes are still common in film. More than in earlier courses we traced the historical development of selected film industries, in an effort to suggest how international events and societal conditions affected ethnic images in film, and discussed the ways in which social movements, such as the U.S. civil rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s, led to increased filmic attention to ethnic groups and their problems. Since many students identified with particular ethnic groups and had emotional feelings about ethnic relations, class discussions were spontaneous and engaging.

Students were required to write three critical essays, two on films shown in class and a third comparing the treatment of ethnicity in a film screened in class with one viewed outside of class. This allowed students to apply the critical facilities de-

veloped in the course to recreational media experiences. Outside films as disparate as *To Kill a Mockingbird, Manhattan, The Deer Hunter, Love at First Bite,* and *The Defiant Ones* were examined for their treatment of ethnicity. This outside assignment dramatized for students the need to remain alert to depictions and images of ethnic groups in films produced for entertainment purposes and to note the pervasiveness of these images throughout our culture.

The final examination sought a consideration of particular aspects of ethnic relations, interethnic male-female contacts, diversity and status differentials within ethnic groups, and ethnic perceptions and treatment of other ethnic groups, particularly the dominance and exploitation of one by another. We also asked students to explore the relationships between ethnicity and socio-economic mobility, centering on the loss of ethnicity through the acculturative processes of education, physical mobility, and economic gain. Students were also asked to compare the treatment of particular ethnic groups in selected films and to assess the impact of societal factors on the differential images. Finally, we asked students how they would organize a course on race and ethnicity in film, the classroom strategies they would employ, the work they would require, and the strengths and weaknesses of using film as a source for the teaching of history.

As a group students responded positively to the class. As one student put it, "Film, in my opinion, is a very important source for studying ethnicity because so much of it is a question of perception." Analyzing visual and aural perceptions of various ethnic groups was felt to be extremely effective as a means of better understanding particular historical epochs and shifting national moods about ethnic groups. Students also felt they benefited greatly from lectures and background readings, although they did suggest the addition of other materials, such as film reviews and information about filmmakers, as a guide to their motivation in producing the films.

In general students appreciated the discussion sections that followed each film as a means of developing their ideas on the themes of the course, and they felt they gained more insights into films on which they had written critical essays than from those they had not critiqued in writing. Some had difficulty with the comparative focus of the course and suggested delimiting the focus to one ethnic group in a particular country and grouping films chronologically to make it easier to develop a more tangible history of ethnic relations in one nation. On the other hand, others suggested we broaden the scope of inquiry to include, for example, Chicanos and Native Americans from Canada and Alaska to expand the course's multiethnic perspectives. These student suggestions provide valuable ideas should we decide to offer another film course dealing with ethnicity. The enthusiasm of student responses in class discussions, individual conferences, and student course evaluations demonstrate to us that ethnicity in film is an intellectually exciting and socially valuable topic.

For a comprehensive overview of our course organization, following is our course syllabus and final examination.

Course Syllabus

RACE AND ETHNICITY IN THE HISTORY OF THE AMERICAS: A FILMIC APPROACH

Scope: History 114G, "Race and Ethnicity in the History of the Americas: A Filmic Approach," focuses on the analysis of filmic treatments of race relations and

ethnic experience in the Americas. The course has five goals: (1) to develop in students a better understanding of the function of race and ethnicity in the history of the Americas; (2) to help students learn to examine history from multiethnic and cross-national comparative perspectives; (3) to introduce students to techniques for analyzing films as socio-historical documents; (4) to help students learn to integrate filmic and published sources in historical analysis; and (5) to provide students with practical exercises in the interpretation of these documents through the writing of critical analyses of filmic and written source materials.

Requirements: Students will read three books, two on ethnicity in the U.S. and Latin America and one on film. In addition, in class they will view six U.S. and Latin American feature films focusing on the historical experiences of blacks, Native Americans, and white ethnics, as well as one film of their own choosing outside of class. Students will write three short papers: two written analyses of two of the six feature films shown during the course and one paper comparing the treatment of ethnicity in the film viewed outside of class with films screened in class. Each of the three papers will be typed, double-spaced, and five pages in length and each will be worth 20 percent of the course grade. To be acceptable, papers on a film shown in class Tuesday must be turned in by the beginning of the Thursday class meeting following the screening of that film. Papers on films viewed outside of class will be due by the beginning of class on Tuesday, June 5. Failure to submit one or more papers on time will result in F's on the missing papers. No late papers will be accepted. The remaining 40 percent of the course grade will be based on a final examination (30 percent) and class participation (10 percent).

Substance of Film Analyses: Papers must emphasize your analysis and evaluation of the usefulness of the film for a better understanding of the history of ethnicity in the Americas. Included in each paper should be an analysis of the filmmaker's goals in making the film, a statement of the thesis (message) conveyed, and an evaluation of the techniques which were used to convey and dramatize this message. Papers are to be neither summaries of plots nor esthetic evaluations of the film as art, although you may wish to include a discussion of plot and/or esthetics to strengthen your analysis.

Required Reading:

Dinnerstein, Leonard; Nichols, Roger L.; and Reimers, David M. ***Natives and Strangers. Ethnic Groups and the Building of America.***

Morner, Magnus (ed.). ***Race and Class in Latin America.***

Woll, Allen L. ***The Latin Image in American Film.***

Recommended Reading:

Bobker, Lee. ***Elements of Film.***

Course Outline:

Weeks		I. Introduction to Film and Ethnicity
I	Tuesday, April 3	Introduction
	Thursday, April 5	Ethnicity in the United States
II	Tuesday, April 10	Ethnicity in Latin America
	Thursday, April 12	Filmic Language
	Films: ***Basic Film Terms: A Visual Dictionary*** and ***Why Man Creates***	
III	Tuesday, April 17	Ethnicity in U.S. Films
	Thursday, April 19	Ethnicity in Latin American Films

II. Slavery and Its Aftermath

IV	Tuesday, April 24	Film: ***The Other Francisco*** (Cuba, 1975)
	Thursday, April 26	Discussion of ***The Other Francisco***
V	Tuesday, May 1	Film: ***No Way Out*** (U.S.A., 1950)
	Thursday, May 3	Discussion of ***No Way Out***

III. The Indian's Struggle for Survival in a Multiethnic Society

VI	Tuesday, May 8	Film: ***The Searchers*** (U.S.A., 1956)
	Thursday, May 10	Discussion of ***The Searchers***
VII	Tuesday, May 15	Film: ***Blood of the Condor*** (Bolivia, 1969)
	Thursday, May 17	Discussion of ***Blood of the Condor***

IV. Ethnicity and Adaption in an Urban Setting

VIII	Tuesday, May 22	Film: ***The Traitors*** (Argentina, 1973)
	Thursday, May 24	Discussion of ***The Traitors***
IX	Tuesday, May 29	Film: ***Mean Streets*** (U.S.A., 1973)
	Thursday, May 31	Discussion of ***Mean Streets***

V. Conclusion

X	Tuesday, June 5	Discussion of films seen individually by class members for comparative purposes
	Thursday, June 7	Film and Ethnicity in Retrospect

Final Examination

I. (60 points) Write on two of the following five subjects:

A. Compare the filmmaker's treatment of interethnic male-female relations in ***The Searchers*** and ***Mean Streets***.

B. Compare the filmmaker's treatment of intragroup diversity and ethnic identity in ***Blood of the Condor*** and ***The Other Francisco***.

C. Compare the filmmaker's treatment of intergroup ethnic perceptions in ***Mean Streets*** and ***No Way Out***.

D. Compare the filmmaker's treatment of ethnic dominance and interethnic exploitation in ***The Searchers*** and ***The Other Francisco***.

E. Compare the filmmaker's treatment of the relationship between ethnicity and socio-economic mobility in ***The Traitors***, ***Blood of the Condor***, and ***No Way Out***. (If you wish, you may choose to compare only two of these three films.)

II. (30 points) Compare the treatment of either blacks, Indians, or white ethnics in the feature films which were shown in class. In this essay you may discuss as few as two or as many as all six of those films. In addition, you may wish to include a comparison with other films you have seen.

III. (10 points) You have been asked to teach a course on Race and Ethnicity in Film (not necessarily Race and Ethnicity in the Americas). Describe how you would organize the course, what classroom strategies you would use, and what you would require. You may wish to include in your discussion a partial list of films you would show and a rationale for that selection. In your essay, also be sure to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of film as a source for the teaching of history.

Student Papers

The heart of the course, obviously, was student analysis of the films as expressed both in class discussions and in required papers. For their earlier papers based on classroom films, students had the option of focusing on individual films or taking a comparative approach. For their final papers, students were required to compare at least one film seen in class with at least one film viewed outside of class. Examples of these papers, including all of their final papers, are included in this book. In general, students dealt with four topics: (1) factors in the making of films; (2) group depictions; (3) basic global themes; (4) cross-national perspectives.

(1) Factors in the Making of Films

In addressing factors in the making of films, students tended to focus on three major aspects – perspective of the filmmaker, historical context, and filmic language. We encouraged students to attempt to discern what they felt were the filmmakers' goals in creating the films, their successes or failures in achieving these goals, their attitudes toward ethnicity and ethnic experience, and the ways in which filmmaker attitudes toward ethnicity and ethnic groups were intentionally or unintentionally reflected in the film. An interesting example of an effort to compare filmmaker intent, attitudes, and achievement was Ruthanne Williams' essay examining ***Blood of the Condor*** and ***The Searchers***. In some cases, students went beyond the issues of simply intent and attitude and grappled with the question of underlying ideology of the filmmaker or the social system, as in Susan Gregory's discussion of the Cuban film, ***The Other Francisco***.

While encouraging students to deal with the contributions of individual filmmakers, we also continuously stressed the significance of historical and societal context in which films were made. Although filmmakers are not prisoners of their historical and societal milieu, we addressed the issue of how this context affected filmmakers and how, in some respects, filmmakers diverged from or rebelled against societal norms. ***The Other Francisco*** is interesting as a Marxist-Castro Cuban interpretation of Cuban slavery and reflects the prevailing governmental ideology of Cuba at that time, yet ***Blood of the Condor*** becomes doubly meaningful when consideration is given to the fact that Jorge Sanjinés was criticizing many of the prevailing governmental practices and elite values in Bolivia. For full comprehension, ***No Way Out*** must be seen in the context of post-World War II white liberalism and the emergence of the anti-prejudice film, while ***Mean Streets*** should be viewed in the context of the New Ethnicity boom of the 1960s and 1970s and as an effort of an Italian-American filmmaker to reinterpret his own group's ethnic experience. While the general youthfulness of our students forced them to rely on second-hand information for understanding those different societal contexts, some of their attempts to place the films in their historical milieu were noteworthy.

Finally, students were also encouraged to address the issue of filmic language.

The interethnic symbolism of the handcuffs and chains binding Tony Curtis and Sidney Poitier throughout most of ***The Defiant Ones*** is discussed in the essay by Michael Álvarez. Actors as icons – the significance of such actors as John Wayne and Sidney Poitier in injecting immediate meaning into their films by their very presence – was often discussed by students. The role of music, including ethnic music, both as background and as intrinsic to the plot, were consistently examined, as in Susan Gregory's analysis of ***The Harder They Come*** and ***Blood of the Condor.*** Jon Bumps dealt with the question of filmic language from a child's perspective in his discussion of ***To Kill a Mockingbird.*** In short, students continuously grappled with the components which affect the making of a film, particularly the role of the filmmaker, societal context, and varieties of filmic language.

(2) Depictions of Ethnic Groups

Obviously and logically, students continuously dealt with the question of how filmmakers depicted individual ethnic groups. To their credit, students were generally able to move beyond the traditional self-limiting perspective of "look how moviemakers have stereotyped us (or them)" which tends to dominate and often trivializes writing about ethnicity in films and on television. Not that we ignored the issue of stereotyping, which is still important. However, students were challenged to and, for the most part, rose to the challenge of contending with the fuzzy line between generalizations and stereotypes as well as the related issues of validity of depiction and balance of ethnic presentation. Moreover, as in the essays on ***Love at First Bite*** by Susan Damon and Ruthanne Williams, some students dealt with the issue of parody of ethnic stereotyping as filmic themes.

In addressing group depictions, students discussed the dynamic issues of intragroup commonalities and intragroup diversity. Myron Berry's essay, for example, dealt with the impact of the relationship between being female or male and ethnicity. Intragroup diversity was also dealt with by Pamela Duncan in her insightful essay on ***Mean Streets.*** Moreover, in a rather daring and generally successful final effort, she addressed the function of ethnicity and intragroup diversity in an at-first-glance-non-ethnic film, ***Born Yesterday,*** emphasizing the exclusion of ethnic difference as a pervasive factor in American films.

Along with intragroup diversity, intergroup comparisons served as a basic tack taken by students in their analyses. ***Mean Streets*** proved to be a gold mine for students applying comparative intergroup perspective. Sally McAlpin contrasted the depiction of Russian Americans in ***The Deer Hunter*** with Italian Americans in ***Mean Streets.*** Diana Johnson, on the other hand, took the flip side of the comparative approach. Instead of comparing ethnic group depictions, she compared ethnic perspectives on a single city – New York City as viewed from a Jewish-American perspective in ***Manhattan*** and from an Italian-American perspective in ***Mean Streets.***

(3) Basic Global Themes

Overall, students perceived four basic underlying themes as running throughout the films: (1) race and class; (2) intergroup (particularly interethnic) relations; (3) intragroup conflict; and (4) mobility, including obstacles to and strategies for overcoming obstacles to mobility. The questions of the relative significance and interlocking nature of race and class have long been major issues in ethnicity scholarship. Students discovered that filmmakers, too, have grappled with these themes. Susan Gregory, for example, addressed the comparative significance of Afro-Caribbean ancestry and identity as interpreted in the Jamaican film, ***The Harder They Come,***

with Andean Indian identity in the Bolivian film, ***Blood of the Condor***. Jon Bumps provided a comparative interpretation of ***To Kill a Mockingbird*** and ***No Way Out*** by analyzing class perspectives on interethnic relations in these two films.

Both intergroup (particularly interethnic) and intragroup (particularly intraethnic) relations, including conflict, pervaded the films. Motion pictures dramatized such interethnic themes as prejudice and discrimination. However, filmic treatments varied, often reflecting the ethnocentric perspectives of the filmmakers and filling the spectrum from analyses of interethnic complexities to the simplicity of the traditional "good guys (one group) vs. bad guys (the other group)" approach. One essay which emphasized the issue of intergroup relations was Michael Alvarez' comparison of ***The Defiant Ones*** and ***No Way Out***.

Finally, students identified the issue of mobility in most of the films. This included the themes of obstacles to mobility and different types of efforts for dealing with these obstacles. Charles McCray, Jr., focused on this issue in his essay comparing labor conflict in the Argentine film, ***The Traitors***, and the U.S. film, ***Blue Collar***.

(4) Cross-National Comparisons

One goal of our course was to challenge students to deal across national boundaries in their analyses of race and ethnicity. This they did throughout the course in class discussions. Moreover, a number of papers dealt specifically with the implications not only of ethnicity in different nations, but also of differing perspectives of filmmakers in different nations as they dealt with ethnicity. The essays of Ruthanne Williams, Ron Acosta, and Charles McCray illustrate approaches to the issue of cross-national comparisons.

In her essay on ***Blood of the Condor*** and ***The Searchers***, Ruthanne Williams dealt cross-nationally with portrayals of ethnic groups, including the issue of balance vs. stereotyping. Ron Acosta analyzed mutual impact when persons of different nations come into contact, as portrayed in ***The Deer Hunter*** and ***Blood of the Condor***. Charles McCray chose to compare labor conflict cross-nationally, using ***The Traitors*** and ***Blue Collar***.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Student Essays

There is no such thing as the perfect written work. Even the finest of novels, the most reknowned plays, and the most professional of journalistic pieces exhibit both strengths and weaknesses. Not surprisingly, then, the student essays in our course contained both.

On the positive side, many of the essays reflected perceptiveness, imagination, and careful analysis. The better essays demonstrated a serious effort to draw interethnic and cross-national comparisons and to relate the films to both the subject being analyzed and the societal context in which they were made. Most important, particularly considering that most of the students had never previously written film analyses, the final essays generally showed a tremendous increase in analytical ability, multicultural conceptualization, and writing effectiveness.

On the negative side, essays often suffered from the fact that most students entered the course without previous backgrounds in Latin American history, without any specific study of the topics of race and ethnicity, and with little if any experience in writing film analyses. Beyond this, the most common weaknesses were student tendencies, which we have noted in all of our courses, toward making all-encompassing statements and leaping too quickly from a limited amount of evidence to unsupportable generalizations.

In reading the following essays, it should be recognized that they are to only a slight degree selected. We have not attempted to "put our best foot forward" by publishing only the outstanding student essays. Rather, we have included the final comparative essays of all eleven students, as well as three additional essays selected for specific illustrative purposes: Pamela Duncan's essay on ***Mean Streets***, because of its analysis of intragroup diversity; Ruthanne Williams' essay on ***Blood of the Condor*** and ***The Searchers***, because of its cross-national comparison of the depiction of Indians; and Susan Gregory's essay on ***The Other Francisco***, because none of the students addressed that film in their final essays. Finally, it should be remembered that these are not esthetic critiques, but historical analyses. While some students did include esthetic comments and analysis of such factors as filmic language in their essays, the primary goal was to assess these films as historical documents.

Given the complex nature of the theme of race and ethnicity, the difficulties involved in any area of cross-national comparative analysis, the special challenge of film as a historical document, and the lack of background knowledge on the part of the students, we are most happy with the results. The students accepted the challenge; their perceptual, analytical, and compositional growth in the course indicates that they met the challenge well. More than ever, we are convinced that feature films are an ideal source for the study of history and society when used within a carefully defined conceptual and methodological framework.

FOOTNOTES

1. Leon G. Campbell, Carlos E. Cortés, and Robert Pinger, ***Latin America: A Filmic Approach*** (Riverside: Latin American Studies Program, University of California, 1975); Carlos E. Cortés, Leon G. Campbell, and Alan Curl, ***A Filmic Approach to the Study of Historical Dilemmas*** (Riverside: Latin American Studies Program, University of California, 1976); and Leon G. Campbell and Carlos E. Cortés, ***Film as Revolutionary Weapon: A Pedagogical Analysis*** (Riverside: Latin American Studies Program, University of California, 1977).
2. For example, see Garth Jowett, ***Film: The Democratic Art*** (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1976) and Robert Sklar, ***Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies*** (New York: Random House, 1975).
3. Sklar, ***loc. cit.***
4. Leon G. Campbell and Carlos E. Cortés, "Film as a Revolutionary Weapon: A Jorge Sanjinés Retrospective," ***The History Teacher***, 12:3 (May, 1979), pp. 383-402.
5. ***Latin America***, pp. 5-11; ***Historical Dilemmas***, pp.5-18; ***Revolutionary Weapon***, pp. 5-12.
6. This problem is also dealt with in Michael T. Isenberg, "The Historian and the Myth of the 'Objective Camera': A Critique of Film Reality," ***Teaching History***, 1:1 (Spring, 1976), pp. 6-14.
7. Joan Didion, ***The White Album*** (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), p. 88.
8. Randall M. Miller (ed.), ***The Kaleidoscope Lens: Ethnic Images in American Film*** (Englewood, N.J.: Jerome S. Ozer, 1979); Allen L. Woll, ***The Latin Image in American Film*** (Los Angeles: Latin American Center, University of California, 1977); Thomas Cripps, ***Slow Fade to Black: The Negro in American Film, 1900-1942*** (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977); Ralph E.

Friar and Natasha A. Friar, ***The Only Good Indian . . . The Hollywood Gospel*** (New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1972); Eugene Franklin Wong, ***On Visual Media Racism: Asians in the American Motion Pictures*** (Ph.D. Dissertation, Graduate School of International Studies, University of Denver, 1977; Reprinted, New York: Arno Press, 1977); Donald Bogle, ***Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mamies & Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films*** (New York: Viking Press, 1973).

9. For a more complete discussion of the concept and principles of multiethnic and multicultural education, see James A. Banks, ***Multiethnic Education: Practices and Promises*** (Bloomington, Ind.: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1977) and Carlos E. Cortés, Fay Metcalf, and Sharryl Hawke, ***Understanding You and Them. Tips for Teaching about Ethnicity*** (Boulder, Colo.: ERIC Clearinghouse for Social Studies/Social Science Education and Social Science Education Consortium, 1976).

10. Carl N. Degler, ***Neither Black nor White. Slavery and Race Relations in Brazil and the United States*** (New York: Macmillan, 1971).

11. Magnus Morner, ***Race Mixture in the History of Latin America*** (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1967).

12. Frank Tannenbaum, ***Slave and Citizen. The Negro in the Americas*** (New York: Knopf, 1946).

13. Charles R. Boxer, ***Race Relations in the Portuguese Colonial Empire, 1415-1825*** (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963). Also see Leslie B. Rout, Jr., ***The African Experience in Spanish America*** (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

14. Laura Foner and Eugene D. Genovese (eds.), ***Slavery in the New World: A Reader in Comparative History*** (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969) and Robert Brent Toplin (ed.), ***Slavery and Race Relations in Latin America*** (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1974).

15. Magnus Morner (ed.), ***Race and Class in Latin America*** (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970).

16. Marvin Harris, ***Patterns of Race in the Americas*** (New York: Walker and Company, 1964).

17. Nicolás Sánchez-Albornoz, ***The Population of Latin America: A History*** (Berkeley: Latin American Studies Center, University of California, 1974); Celso Furtado, ***Economic Development of Latin America: A Survey from Colonial Times to the Cuban Revolution*** (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1970); and Germán Arciniegas, ***Latin America: A Cultural History*** (New York: Knopf, 1967).

18. Eric R. Wolf and Edward C. Hansen, ***The Human Condition in Latin America*** (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972) and Julius Rivera, ***Latin America: A Sociocultural Interpretation*** (New York: Irvington Publishers, 1978).

19. Milton Gordon, ***Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion, and National Origins*** (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).

20. Andrew Greeley, ***Ethnicity in the United States: A Preliminary Reconnaissance*** (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1974).

21. Salvatore J. LaGumina and Frank J. Cavaioli, ***The Ethnic Dimension in American Society*** (Boston: Holbrook Press, 1974) and James Stuart Olson, ***The Ethnic Dimension in American History*** (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979).

22. Maxine Seller, ***To Seek America. A History of Ethnic Life in the United States*** (Englewood, N.J.: Jerome S. Ozer, 1977) and Leonard Dinnerstein, Roger L. Nichols, and David M. Reimers, ***Natives and Strangers. Ethnic Groups and the Building of America*** (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).
23. Michael Banton, ***Race Relations*** (New York: Basic Books, 1967) and Pierre L. van den Berghe, ***Race and Racism. A Comparative Perspective*** (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1967).
24. Nathan Glazer and Daniel Moynihan (eds.), ***Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*** (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975).
25. Cynthia Enloe, ***Ethnic Conflict and Political Development*** (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1973).
26. Lee Bobker, ***Elements of Film*** (3d ed.; New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979).
27. Woll, ***The Latin Image in American Film*** (see footnote 8).
28. Dinnerstein, Nichols, and Reimers, ***Natives and Strangers*** (see footnote 22) and Morner, ***Race and Class in Latin America*** (see footnote 15).

The Harder They Come and *Blood of the Condor*

by

Susan Gregory

Reggae and the fast-paced adventures of a pop-singer-turned-outlaw and popular hero dominate the screen in Jamaica's first feature film, ***The Harder They Come***. Director Perry Henzell, interestingly enough a white Jamaican, combines elements of singer Jimmy Cliff's life with the history of a Rastafarian outlaw, whose exploits several years ago in defying the authorities made him a folk hero. The wild and often comic escapades of the protagonist, Ivan, are accompanied by popular songs of Jamaica's own reggae music. Yet as the pulsating rhythm and electronic sound of reggae reveal lyrics of frustration, anger, and protest, the film itself encompasses far more than the immediate adventures of the renegade, Ivan. It offers a highly complex and fascinating view of the socio-economic and cultural fabric of Jamaican society, which in turn is in many ways a microcosm of the problems currently facing the nations of the Caribbean and large parts of the Third World.

The image of Jamaica as a tropical port, dancing girls, and picturesque market places popularized by calypso songs and travel posters is dashed in the initial scenes of the film. A dilapidated bus, crowded with passengers and parcels, careens down a country road amid lush tropical vegetation. However, with its arrival in Kingston, it leaves these rural scenes far behind, and in their place it finds traffic-choked streets and the shantytowns of West Kingston, exploding over garbage dumps which had been fishing villages years before.

Ivan arrives in Kingston, like so many migrating peasants, in search of a job and with hopes of "making it" in the big city. Like so many others, he ends up in the crowded shantytowns. Ivan's case is not an isolated one. In many ways he personifies a phenomenon familiar not only to Jamaica, but all over the Caribbean and the Third World. The ability of people to survive in traditional ways has been destroyed by a dual process of the erosion of the minifundia through population growth and the concentration of agricultural land and credit in the hands of both foreign and national agribusiness. Massive migration has taken place from the countryside to the cities and abroad in search of a way to make a living.

As the bus makes its way to the capital, reggae blasts out the words:

"You can get it if you really want,

"But you must try, try, and try . . .

"You'll succeed at last . . ."

In Kingston, stores line the streets, peddlers hawk their wares, and billboards and neon signs loom large on the screen. Ivan gets his first view of how the "haves" live, and he becomes increasingly aware of how far out of his reach that life style is. Ivan lines up with dozens of other workers seeking employment, but jobs are scarce.

Unemployment in Jamaica is around 20 per cent, but could reach as high as 35-40 per cent when counting disguised unemployment, underemployment, and those individuals who have just given up looking for work. The modern sector offers little relief for Jamaica's growing work force. Foreign investment, which dominates this sector, has made business boom, but it is primarily made up of capital-intensive operations which require relatively little labor. Industry creates few new jobs and at times actually displaces people. However, new migrants arrive every day. Since

Great Britain closed its doors to migration in the 1960s, this massive migration has directed itself to Kingston, where the people concentrate in shantytowns outside the city.

The Harder They Come explores the world of the shantytowns which has become a way of life, a culture of poverty. Indeed, as Oscar Lewis observed in his studies in Mexico, the people living in these slums develop patterns of behavior, forms of speech, musical expression, and certain skills for coping with their poverty. The film succeeds in capturing the life-style and mind-set of the shanty dwellers and particularly of the youth, the Rude Boys.

Film, with its unique fusion of image and sound, is particularly suited to portraying ethnicity. The director does not have to directly call attention to the innumerable details which constitute a pattern of living and the socio-cultural manifestations of a group of people. The camera and the soundtrack not only follow the action of the script; they also pick up a whole wealth of information that is peripheral to the main action but which is exceedingly valuable for studying the complex elements and shared experiences which constitute the ethnicity of a group of people.

Language, the Jamaican patois, represents an important means of identification of the shanty dwellers in contrast to the Queen's English spoken by the British colonizers and the mulatto elite. Almost unintelligible to the unaccustomed ear, this "dialect" has developed its own vocabulary, with words of African origin, and its own grammatical forms.

Language is also a means of identification of the sub-group of the Rastafarians. Although only barely touched upon in the film, the Rastafarians are a group united by their religious beliefs, rituals (in particular the smoking of ***ganja*** or marijuana), diet, and long hair worn in "dreadlocks." The Rastafarians were also fundamental in the evolution of reggae, which combines rhythms of Jamaica's African heritage and lyrics from the streets and the Rasta politico-religious movement.

Reggae dominates the film. It provides the plot as well as the inner pulse of the film. Ivan seeks to make it in the world by recording his own reggae compositions, one of the few means of social mobility open to the lower class in Jamaica. However, the music business is virtually a monopoly. In this film the music business also serves as a microcosm of the socio-economic structure of Jamaica. Although the majority of Jamaica's population is black, political and economic power is dominated by a small group of whites, mulattoes, and other honorary whites (like the Chinese who is Hilton's partner).

In addition to providing the plot and appropriate musical background, reggae offers a commentary and counterpoint to what is happening on the screen. The song, "You Can Make It If You Really Want," which at the beginning of the film expresses Ivan's optimism, is heard again later in the film during Ivan's wild escapade at the golf course. He has "made it," but the only way he could do so was as an outlaw. The title song, "The Harder They Come," gives an insight into Ivan's actions and expresses the frustration and anger of a people who have been shut out too long and refuse to wait any longer:

"But I'd rather be a freeman in my grave
"than living as a puppet or a slave.
"So as sure as the sun will shine,
"I'm gonna get my share, right now, what's mine..."

Perry Henzell captures the acute awareness on the part of the shanty dwellers

of the growing division between the "haves" and the "have nots." This awareness is not really an ideological one. It is more a common feeling of frustration, anger, and helplessness at being shut out from the benefits of national growth and development. The atmosphere in the pool halls, discotheques, and tenements simmers with the pressure resulting from these conditions, and the potential for violence is omnipresent.

Violence erupts several times during the film, and ultimately Ivan kills several policemen and becomes an outlaw. Through his desperate act of defying the authorities and all their fire power. he captures the fantasy of the people and becomes a popular hero. However, even this revolt is an alienated one. Ivan's rebellion is not a revolutionary one, aimed at changing the structure which oppresses him and his people. While singing reggae and smoking *ganja* he, like so many Jamaicans, is caught up in the penetration of U.S. culture. He has internalized the U.S. myth of individualism, so aptly symbolized by the American western. Through the technique of a film within a film (a western where the rugged individual takes on a dozen gunslingers single-handedly), to which Henzell flashes back during Ivan's exploits and final stand, Henzell shows how profoundly this myth has been internalized and its consequences for society.

There are many interesting parallels and contrasts between Peter Henzell's *The Harder They Come* and Jorge Sanjinés' film, *Blood of the Condor*. Both explore the ethnicity of a large, marginalized sector of the national population – in Jamaica, the urban poor, and in Bolivia, the Quechua Indians. Both films used few or no actors; the people played themselves, a fact which makes the films more insightful for studying the ethnicity of these groups. Perry Henzell gives dignity to street Jamaicans, to their speech, to their music and to their skills for coping with poverty. Jorge Sanjinés affirms and vindicates the long denigrated culture of the Quechua Indians. Both Jamaica and Bolivia have experienced the profound effects of centuries of colonialism and, more recently, neocolonialism. In both countries the members of the upper class and those who want to get ahead have tried to be as much like the white colonializers as possible in culture, dress, religion, speech, and consumption patterns. They would like to see themselves as part of a "cultured" (i.e. Western culture) and developed community. I would imagine that upper-class Jamaicans would react to *The Harder They Come* with much the same chagrin which upper-class Bolivians expressed upon viewing *Blood of the Condor*.

There are also very significant differences between these two films, stemming both from the different circumstances of the two groups portrayed and from the ultimate solutions which the films appear to propose. Perry Henzell deals with the urban poor, many of whom have been forced off their land to look for work in the cities (a situation more similar to that of Sixto in *Blood of the Condor*). Jorge Sanjinés' film focuses on a rural subsistence community. The Indians of the community still own the land, but it yields very little. Their life is molded by the limits and demands of nature and by time-honored customs. As in all of Latin America, the urban-rural dichotomy is a powerful factor in the ethnicity of the different sectors of the population.

Another significant difference resides in the roles that race plays in determining the ethnicity of these two groups. Bolivia is a country of great racial schisms. The Quechua of the Altiplano have remained to a large extent racially and culturally (as well as geographically) isolated from the white and mestizo sectors of the

Bolivian population. Their race and the traditions of centuries of Quechua civilization are key elements of their ethnicity. Jamaica, on the other hand, is a primarily black country. Although a color spectrum does exist and mulattoes have generally held a more socially and politically dominant position along with the remaining white community, cultural and social patterns cannot be clearly identified along racial lines. The life-style and resulting socio-cultural identity of a group – in the case of ***The Harder They Come***, the urban poor – appear to be formed by its socio-economic position in society.

The solution to the problem of the marginalization and exploitation of these two groups is portrayed very differently in these two films. In ***The Harder They Come***, Ivan's protest and revolt are purely individualistic. He gets his share momentarily, but ultimately his actions and his death signify no changes for his people. In ***Blood of the Condor***, Jorge Sanjinés emphasizes the necessity of collective action. Neither Ignacio nor Sixto act alone or for purely individual ends. The final freeze frame of raised rifles conveys the idea of mass struggle and the need for the revolutionary transformation of society in order to obtain social justice for the Quechua. In ***The Harder They Come*** it remains unclear whether Perry Henzell means to show the futility of individual (and alienated) action and thus, by counter example, to convey the necessity for collective action or whether he means to go no further than critique the corruption and injustice of the prevailing socio-economic system.

Blue Collar and *The Traitors*

by

Charles McCray, Jr.

The films, ***The Traitors*** and ***Blue Collar***, offer a favorable field for comparison. Both films concern corrupt union leadership. Both films call for an overthrow of that leadership. ***The Traitors*** appears to call for an armed overthrow. In several scenes workers violently react against the union. There are also scenes in which dissenters are physically attacked by the union to dissuade them from their activity. In ***The Traitors***, the corrupt union official, Barrera, is finally gunned down by a team of male and female workers during a victory celebration.

In contrast, ***Blue Collar*** does not offer us a workers' revolt, but shows us workers who try to take matters into their own hands after discovering incriminating evidence of corruption among union officials. I am led to believe that the director wished for us to infer that we can attack corrupt union officials, but we must do it through the system. I base this inference on the last few scenes in which the white main character, Jerry Bartkowski, gives himself up to the law and will tell them everything he knows in order to protect himself and his family.

Throughout the film we are shown that the three main characters, Smokey James, Zeke Brown, and Jerry Bartkowski, are no match for the union. They bungle the safe-cracking of union headquarters, try to blackmail the union – after finding a ledger which contains information of illegal loans – and get involved with a small-time gangster, who turns them over to the police who in turn inform the union. Smokey is murdered, although it looks like an accident; Zeke is given a high union position in the automobile plant where he works; Jerry ends up in the hands of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The union president is gunned down in ***The Traitors***. In ***Blue Collar*** the union continues to function, after alleviating the problem of Smokey, Zeke, and Jerry. We have to admit that, with Jerry in the hands of the F.B.I., there is the possibility that the union could be brought to trial.

Ethnicity in ***The Traitors*** is low key. There was no distinct portrayal of any ethnic group. I could only infer from the names used in the movie – Martini, Marchetti, Peralta – that Italians were one of the ethnic groups being portrayed. The director did on occasion give us close-up shots of various faces in crowds, meetings, and demonstrations. Given what I know about Latin America ethnic groups, I tried to match the faces with my conception of those ethnics. The distinction in ***The Traitors*** was one of class rather than ethnicity. The people appeared to be a fairly homogeneous population, although we know the Argentine population is composed of Indians, blacks, white ethnics, and what can be referred to as mainstream Argentines.

The director clearly portrayed class distinctions. You knew who the workers were. He put in scenes of nice, high-fashion homes. We were shown people with cars ranging from economy to luxury types. There was a scene at the race track in which the plant owner showed Barrera a race horse. In the film Barrera moved from a poorly-dressed worker to a fashionably-dressed union president.

Ethnicity was conspicuous in ***Blue Collar***. Two of the main characters are blacks. The main white character is Polish. I do not know if it was the director's

intention or not, but he is guilty of showing blacks in the usual stereotypical way. Smokey James is the street-wise, two-time loser, resident stud, and general malcontent. Zeke Brown is shown as the loud, foul-mouthed opportunistic, pushy black. Zeke's children are shown as foul-mouthed and argumentative. Jerry Bartkowski's children are shown as average American lower-middle class.

Numerous scenes illustrate this obseervation. Jerry's daughter tries to make braces out of twine so she will look pretty enough to make the baton-twirling team. Jerry sits at the kitchen table working on family bills, while his daughter twirls the baton. Jerry never curses at his children. In contrast in Zeke's house, children curse one another and fight over toys. Zeke curses them out. Zeke's wife curses; Jerry's wife does not. Zeke tried to defraud the tax people. Blacks in the plant curse all the time. Whites curse only when it seems appropriate.

The director also uses music to push ethnicity. When the scene is played predominantly white, there is country-and-western music; when mixed or black-oriented, we hear blues, soul, or pop. Stereotypical ethnicity is further exploited in the scene in which Smokey, Zeke, and Jerry are at a party at Smokey's. The women are white and black. There are scenes of black women actively indulging in sex. The white girls in the party are not portrayed as active participants. There is no physical contact between a black male and white female other than a friendly kiss at the door.

While Smokey and Zeke are portrayed negatively, Jerry is portrayed positively. He works two jobs to keep his family intact and at a fair level of living. He does not try to cheat on his income tax. He has a conscience, is loyal to his friends, and is an all-around good old boy who likes beer, softball, and an occasional fling on the town.

In ***The Traitors***, the one main character, Barrera, appears to me not to be portrayed stereotypically. The film shows one man's advancement from worker to union boss, who is corrupted by money and power on his way up. The director does this very nicely by using flashbacks to show us the changes in the union as well as the man. We watch as he advances through the class structure to a point that appears to be upper-middle class. Upon reaching middle-class standing he loses touch with the workers and begins to identify with the plant owners. He has learned that he can play both ends against the middle for his own benefit.

As in ***Blue Collar***, the union president in ***The Traitors*** is not above having his opposition silenced if he cannot maintain control. We are shown the strength of both union presidents in maintaining the status quo.

In ***The Traitors*** Barrera loses his strength (belief that he is good by his workers) and is shot. In ***Blue Collar***, Johnson maintains his strength when Smokey is killed, enhances it by promoting Zeke, and intimidates Jerry to the point that he turns to the F.B.I. Both films would appeal to the working-class audience. There is a feeling of pride when a worker either gets the better of the establishment or fouls it up. They can identify with anger and frustration and may go as far as armed revolt as shown in ***The Traitors*** or use the system as shown in ***Blue Collar***.

I think the goal of the filmmakers in ***Blue Collar*** was one of entertainment versus education. Everyone identifies with the "us-against-them" syndrome. It has been the basis historically for wars, revolutions, and demonstrations. In ***Blue Collar*** we are shown a realistic view of production in an automobile plant. We are shown the actual process of the automobile being manufactured. It can be an educational experience if you are also interested in how your automobile is made while you are

also being entertained.

The Traitors offers another viewpoint. You cannot tell if what you see is a realistic portrayal of actual events that have taken place. The director does use footage of workers demonstrating in the streets of Argentina, but this does not lend itself to realism throughout the movie.

As stated in the beginning, both films call for an overthrow of the union leadership. But who is really the enemy, the union or the plant? Both films leave us dangling. In ***The Traitors***, who is going to take over, Martini or Peralta? In ***Blue Collar*** will be federal government get an indictment against the union based on Jerry's testimony? Historically, it has been shown that union leadership comes and goes, but the plants remain.

Blood of the Condor and *The Searchers*

by

Ruthanne Williams

While race and ethnicity have been treated in both U.S. and Latin American films, these topics have been approached in different ways by the two film industries. One group, Indians, has been the subject of many films dealing with race relations. Two such "Indian" films will be compared here. ***The Searchers*** is a U.S. film directed by John Ford. For a Latino perspective, ***Yawar Mallku*** (***Blood of the Condor*** – Jorge Sanjinés) is a good choice. Both films are concerned with Indian-white relations, but present quite different views.

The two films' perspectives are the most obvious contrast. In ***Yawar Mallku***, Bolivian Indians and their culture are the main focus. This film shows the Indians and their reactions to "civilization" and to whites. ***The Searchers***, however, focuses on the white settlers in Texas, while the Indians only get indirect attention. The Indian culture is seen only through the eyes of the whites; no scenes depicting Indian life without this white influence are included. Thus, one film is "pro-white," while the other is "pro-Indian."

The time periods in which the films are set comprise another important factor. ***The Searchers***, while filmed in 1956, deals with post-Civil War Texas. ***Yawar Mallku*** was released in 1969 and is more concerned with present-day attitudes. The first film comes off as a classic of the western genre; the second is more of a social commentary. This brings up the question of audience.

Yawar Mallku was intended to be a revolutionary film. Not only was Sanjinés making a social comment; he wanted the film to be a call for revolution. The scene at the end of the film showing guns upraised is a classic call to arms. Unfortunately, the Bolivian Indians could not even understand the basic concepts of the film, so Sanjinés' shot missed. The film's popularity lay mainly with the middle class.

In contrast, ***The Searchers*** was an entertainment film, whose primary motive was profit. Its star, John Wayne, enjoyed almost a cult-like following in the U.S. The film may also have some social comment, but on the surface it deals mainly with the myth of the Old West.

The Searchers carries an underlying concept of the goodness of being white throughout the film. The characters often change dramatically to support this. Ethan, for example, makes a big concession in deciding not to kill Debby. In turn, Debby suddenly chooses to go back to the whites. Neither of these changes are explained and seem inconsistent with the characters. Indians are portrayed either as dirty, vicious savages or as low intelligence natives. Little of their culture, such as religion or family patterns, is explored in the film.

The film does contain some discrepancies which may indicate that Ford did want to make some social comment. The best example of this is the scene in which Ethan and Scar confront one another. When Ethan asks Scar how he came to speak English, Scar counters by asking Ethan why he speaks Comanche. Also, scalping by the Indians is played up throughout the film, yet when the Texas Rangers descend on the Indian village, a Ranger is shown taking an Indian scalp. If these incidents represent an ironic comment on racism, they become a redeeming social factor in ***The Searchers***.

Yawar Mallku gives a totally different look at an Indian society. The Indians' way of life is presented as a valid culture. Their religion, political system, and social structure are all examined in the film. The Indians come across as a proud and intelligent people. They can be violent, as demonstrated by their revenge on the foreigners of the Progress Corps. The audience's sympathy, however, is not with the whites, but with these Indians who were manipulated and provoked to their limit.

In the Bolivian film, the same concept that goodness equals whiteness is put forth, but Sanjinés manipulates it so that it seems ridiculous. The white foreigners are pompous and condescending – a real caricature of the interfering imperialist. The non-Indian Bolivians, in trying to impress the foreigners and adopt their ways, end by appearing to be traitors to their own country. The stigma of being Indian is emphasized during the course of the film. This is resolved to some extent when Sixto, disillusioned with the white world, returns to his people.

Both films deal with white-Indian racial tensions, but at two poles. This is partly explained by the fact that two radically different film industries are at work. The motivation for making each film was different; one film was for entertainment and the other for social comment. The points of view are dissimilar, with ***Yawar Mallku*** being pro-Indian, while ***The Searchers*** is primarily pro-white. All things considered, each film is great when judged according to its original purpose, but ***Yawar Mallku*** has many more profound, far-reaching statements to make. Its comments on the injustices of a small dominant group within a society toward a majority, on the question of foreign intervention, and on a people's right to a certain amount of autonomy make this film a real classic.

Mean Streets

by

Pamela Duncan

I see Martin Scorsese's ***Mean Streets*** as a picture of urban Italian-American ethnics. Although Scorsese did feature people of non-Italian ethnicity in his film, his portrayal of them was sketchy and inconsistent. Moreover, he used them only in relation to the Italians, as a foil by which to clarify the racial prejudices of the latter. Therefore, in my opinion, ***Mean Streets*** is a study of Italian-American ethnicity alone. Scorsese focused upon the ethics of this group. Urban Italian-American ethnics, according to the film, are characterized by three underlying concepts: the importance of the clan; the penetrating influence of the Roman Catholic faith; and, finally, the commonplace status of criminal practices.

The clannishness of Italian Americans was evident throughout the film. The home movies of Johnny Boy, shown at the beginning, set, from the start, a sort of homey, "we're-best-friends" tone. Johnny himself was a vehicle which Scorsese used effectively to show the closeness of the Italian community. The character was obviously irresponsible and a bad credit risk. Yet, through most of the film, his friends and neighbors—people not even related to him—continued to give him credit and lend him money. This certainly could not happen in any other kind of community but one in which the members actively looked out for one another.

On the other hand, this deep concern was obviously for Italians only. Most of the major characters displayed a glaring racism, particularly against Blacks. Michael's horror at Tony's revelation that his girlfriend had been seen "kissing a nigger," Teresa's antagonism toward the black maid, and similar incidents scattered through the film portrayed the Italians' hostility. A more subtle prejudice was displayed against Jews when Tony knowingly labeled a girl "Jewish" simply because she was promiscuous. The Italians' attitude toward Anglos is in question. Whereas, at one point, Tony and Johnny could con two Anglo teenagers, another sequence showed the major characters throwing a party for an Anglo named Jerry. I think that it is generally fair to say that the Italians were not hostile toward Anglos, but they certainly did regard them as intimates. Their active concern for one another, as well as their racial prejudices, then, displayed the Italians' emphasis on the clan. Scorsese effectively pictured this "us-against-the-world" attitude in several camera shots of the Italian friends moving through the big city streets, huddled closely together as if in a protective instinct.

The Roman Catholic Church was also an important factor of Italian ethics. Very seldom, except in the character of Charlie, was this brought out overtly. Rather it was a sort of underlying, ever-present influence. The director used visual techniques to continually remind us of this force. Crucifixes were displayed repeatedly, and pictures of saints kept turning up in the strangest places, such as on restaurant walls. Moreover, the dialogue was littered in places with references to "my priest" and "his priest." Scorsese used such subtle techniques very effectively to depict the strong underlying influence of the Catholic faith.

What was strange about this influence was the way in which it coexisted, in the Italian ethic, with the frequent practice of crime. Loan sharking, vandalism, and petty theft—not to mention the attempted murders at the end of the film—were

common practices of these men. There was also, at times, a hint of narcotics–note, for example, the panic that seized the Italian friends when a shooting occurred at Tony's bar and the police were on their way. It seemed to me that they would not have fled in such a wholesale manner had they not been dealing in drugs or some other illicit activity. It was arresting that such friendly, loving, religious men could display, simultaneously, such blatant dishonesty and disregard for the law. However, there it was; criminal activities existed right along with religion and clan loyalty in the urban Italian ethic.

The conflict of these three often contradictory factors was characterized in Charlie. He was obviously trying to be, first and foremost, a good Catholic. He went to Mass, where the others did not; he sometimes prayed aloud; and, while rejecting the penance of the Catholic church, he often inflicted his own strange kind of self-punishment when, several times, he put his hand into some flames. In Charlie, then, the Catholic influence in the Italian ethic had the upper hand.

At the same time, however, he was also involved in crime. This was, at least to my observation, only hinted at. Never once did I actually see Charlie involved in a crime, such as petty theft, although he was certainly pleased when his friends had "stiffed a couple kids." He was very much involved with Johnny's financial troubles, but I do not believe that he was a loan shark. Generally speaking, Charlie did not seem as wrapped up in crime as were his friends and relatives, but he was definitely involved, and this conflicted with his commitment to Catholicism. Teresa expressed this conflict beautifully when she thought it ridiculous that Charlie should want to model himself after St. Francis of Assisi, because "Francis of Assisi didn't run numbers!"

Charlie had obvious difficulties reconciling these two factors of the urban Italian ethic, made even more complicated by his clan loyalty. On the one hand, Charlie's faith, which impressed upon him a commitment to help others, seemed to coincide with his obligation to the clan. This commitment spurred him on to come through for his friends, even beyond the point that clan loyalty demanded. On the other hand, his religion gave him a common regard for all people, which definitely contradicted clannish racism. Note, for example, his politeness to the black maid after Teresa had insulted her, his attraction to the black dancer, feeling that "there's not much difference, is there?" and his friendly flirtation with the "Jewish" girl. His attraction to women of different ethnicity which was irreconcilable with his feeling for the clan, became a constant source of confusion for him.

Charlie then, represented the dilemma of the urban Italian American who is trying to juggle three often contradictory factors in the traditional Italian ethic: his feeling for the clan; the Roman Catholic influence; and his involvement in crime. The director used some good camera shots of Charlie standing in front of the mirror, scrutinizing his face, as though searching his soul for the answer. In my opinion, there is no answer to this complex and apparently unsolvable problem. This is why, in the end, Charlie and his friends inevitably met disaster. And the very unsolvable nature of the urban Italian problem, it seemed to me, was the message which Scorsese was attempting to portray.

Mean Streets and *Manhattan*

by

Diana M. Johnson

Black and white shots of majestic Manhattan skyscrapers fill the screen while the voice of Isaac Davis (Woody Allen) issues a monologue, "He was as tough and romantic as the city he loves." George Gershwin's, "Rhapsody in Blue" is the perfect musical sound track as fireworks explode over Central Park. Isaac, with tongue in cheek, has exposed ***Manhattan*** as a romantic, cosmopolitan comedy portraying the ethnic mentality of America's largest city.

Manhattan, the setting of the movie, is covered by panning shots of skyscrapers. While Isaac gives his monologue, the audience is treated to views of the Empire State, Chrysler, and Seagram buildings. Their majesty dwarfs the tenements that also make up a part of Manhattan. During the movie Woody indulges the audience by including scenes of Bloomingdales, the Russian Team Room, and Zabar's Delicatessen, all part of the ethnic heritage of Manhattan.

Street-level action, the characters caught in a summer rain shower, and interior views of his modest apartment show the Manhattan Woody Allen knows and loves. The camera captures the low-key ordinary city life with the trendy intellectual set enthralled by culture and art museums. Isaac and his friends find fulfillment in the city, not as jet setters, but as culture seekers immersed in their books, lectures, and museums. ***Manhattan*** becomes an enjoyable comedic drama, whose purpose is to entertain and, as all studios hope for, to make money at the boxoffice.

Allen's film speaks to at least five levels of ethnicity. The main chacter, Isaac Davis, exhibits intellectual prowess as a successful Jewish writer. Intellectual achievement for their children has always been a definite goal of Jewish mothers. A standard cliche attributed to the typical Jewish mother is, "my son, the doctor," "my son, the lawyer," or "my son, the professor." Isaac, the successful writer, finds stimulation in Manhattan's cultural palaces, such as museums, theatres, and concert halls.

Ike, in a rash impetuous moment, quits his secure position as a successful writer to fulfill a long standing desire to write a biography of his mother, which he will entitle, "The Castrating Zionist." Although Ike may feel she robbed him of some of his manhood, Ike is very successful with women and this upsets him. He jokes, "I've never had a relationship with a woman that lasted longer than the one between Hitler and Eva Braun." Historically that union lasted from 28th of April until they committed suicide on April 30th. Maybe Ike feels castrated in this respect and seeks a long-term relationship.

Isaac's ex-wife is a liberated woman who has chosen to live with her lesbian lover. In this mod situation she intends to raise Ike's son. That she is successful as a writer is dwarfed by the fact that she is writing an expose of their marriage. These aspects of her life disturb Ike's sense of manhood and of being a father. A Jewish father also takes pride in his son, and to fulfill this role, Ike takes his son to do father-son activities on a regular basis.

Ike's best friends are urban intellectuals whose pursuits are frequenting museums, art galleries, and sophisticated parties. They represent the ethnic mentality of the New Yorker. Ike and friends are on the fringes, not really the pace setters

in the cocktail circuit. Urbane intellectualism is manifest when a woman states, "I finally had an orgasm, and my analyst says it was the wrong kind." Woody pokes fun at this type of intellectualism.

A fiercely trendy liberated woman writer, Mary is having an affair with Ike's best friend, Yale. Mary's frizzled locks, funky chic clothes, and habitual name-dropping serve to portray her liberated outlook on life. In a classroom confrontation concerning his extra-marital involvement, Yale, explodes, "You think you're God!" Ike answers calmly, "Well, I've got to model myself after someone!"

Child-woman, seventeen-year-old Tracy exhibits an upper class WASP profile. At seventeen she has a typical all-out crush on an improbable complete opposite, Isaac. He fulfills the roles of worldly mentor and lover for Tracy. As her worldly mentor, Ike indoctrinates Tracy into the New York mentality.

Woody Allen's ***Manhattan*** reveals the New Yorkers as being set apart, as having an ethnic mentality. Intellectual and cultural pursuits that are uniquely New York are shared by an interrelating group of characters. Woody, as Isaac, portrays a Jewish writer who desires a lasting relationship with a woman. Liberated women, an ex-wife, and a trendy writer-lover have complicated his life. Best friend Yale (the name itself implying Ivy League ties), the college professor, further complicates Isaac's life. Seventeen-year-old Tracy contemplates future education in Europe despite the fact that Isaac wants her to stay in New York and be his. For Isaac, love begins and ends in his beloved Manhattan.

By comparison, ***Mean Streets*** covers an area of Manhattan that is an exact opposite of Woody Allen's ***Manhattan***. Martin Scorsese presents a brisk, fast moving, scary melodrama. Little Italy's ghetto contrasts vividly with upper Manhattan and the trendy artists of Allen's film. ***Mean Streets*** and ***Manhattan*** were made to entertain and to draw at the boxoffice. ***Mean Streets*** thrusts gore and violence at the audience, indicating that it is geared toward a mature audience.

Little Italy definitely establishes minority culture Italians struggling with Church ideals and with the realities of the mafia. Scorsese presents a theme of youthful innocence unable to escape the lure of the underworld. Religious scenes constantly refer to Charlie's Italian ethnic heritage. They include Charlie's baptism, crucifixes on the wall, a replica of the Christ of the Andes on a rooftop, the cross Charlie wears, and Charlie's verbal confidences to God. Iconography, ironically, shows the Pope blessing a mafia restaurant. Religion serves as a unifying force against the alienation from the larger cosmopolitan area.

Mafia confidence exchanges between honorable men is a myth that is perpetuated in ***Mean Streets***. Other ethnic myths of the mafia used are "never welch on a debt," "keep your word," and "I swear on my mother." They are presented as men of great honor through the use of these myths. Trying to survive in the ghetto presents problems that can be topped by the brutality of the underworld. Society in Little Italy is rigged and mafia retaliation guarantees swift and impersonal judgment – "A deal is a deal!" Familial ties are important mafia connections and therefore offer protection. Charlie's uncle guides and takes care of his nephew despite some bungling.

Ghetto inhabitants share more than an ethnic heritage, language, food, and religion. They share the same values. Charlie and company use derogatory phrases with ease when making fun of kikes, fags, niggers, or go-go dancers. Four-letter words also abound. ***Mean Streets*** centers around life in bars, in pool rooms, or in the street where combat is fought with garbage can lids and, later on, with guns.

Street scenes, marching bands, neighborhood intrigue, and festivals are added dimensions of life in Little Italy. Violence is also a way of life, with death the inevitable result. A poster of a firing gun with bold lettering, Point Blank, certainly provides iconography of ghetto life and death. Arguments ending in police interference are accepted as a way of life as it occurred in Joey's bar. The payoff to the black policeman (under the guise of car fare to New Jersey) and Joey's payoff to the mafia via Charlie are exhibited in the same manner. ***Mean Streets*** carries the message that this is an accepted way of life in Little Italy.

An insult to the mafia is a grave mistake. This educational fact is driven home in the final sequences of the film. Oscar's honest inability to pay forces him to conclude that the restaurant belongs to the mafia. But Charlie's mafia uncle says, "We understand; we'll wait awhile; Oscar is okay." But when Charlie's errant buddy calls a mafia collector "a jerk-off," that is an insult and must be paid in kind. The scales are no longer balanced, and Johnny must run. The mafia has been insulted and lost face. A wrecked car, spraying water hydrant, and profuse blood are the result. The final scene, totally black, carries the shock effect to a climax. Thank goodness this violent movie with its gore has come to an end. Scorsese could have said it all in a shorter film.

Woody Allen establishes ***Manhattan*** immediately with his camera technique of panning the city while giving a tongue-in-cheek monologue. Martin Scorsese uses a fast series of jump cuts that cover a baptism, a street carnival, and bar scenes. Allen's opening lets the audience know that an easy-paced serio-comedy will delight them. But Scorsese's use of jump cuts sets up an agitation that keeps an audience on the seat front. Not only are the techniques different, but the subjects covered match the technique. New York wears many faces, and these movies show a stark contrast.

The Deer Hunter and *Blood of the Condor*

by

Ron Acosta

The Deer Hunter and ***Blood of the Condor*** contain similarities and differences with each other. Both movies show ethnicity of two distinct groups of people. ***The Deer Hunter*** is concerned with the Vietnamese people as well as a group of small town Americans involved in varying degrees with the war in Vietnam. ***Blood of the Condor*** is concerned with Bolivian Quechua Indians and the American medical team attempting to assist the native population.

In order to make a valid comparison, it is necessary to discuss the material presented in each film. ***The Deer Hunter*** was a long, very well done film which was an excellent psychological study of the effects of the Vietnam War on the lives of three young men, their families, and friends. They began the story as innocents from an Orthodox Russian background. By the conclusion, those who lived were no longer naive or cocky, as they had been. This particular contrast was evidenced by the behavior of the green beret who wandered into the bar at Angela's and Steve's wedding reception. Emotionally, he was what they were to become. The time and events of Vietnam provide the impetus for the psychological study and the material for the comparison.

Blood of the Condor was a film where the majority of the focus was on the Quechua Indians themselves and one family in particular. They were followed, through the process of flashbacks, from their time as a proud and happy people, secure in their culture, to a confused and alcoholic state of a displaced people.

The portrayal of the Vietnamese people, particularly the Viet Cong, was as a cruel, unfeeling race. They appeared to delight in the fear and misery of others, whether their own people or the enemy. Their disregard for humanity was displayed many times over. One of the earliest incidences was during our first glimpse of the war, when a Viet Cong soldier opened the top of a bunker and threw a bomb in with women and children hiding there.

A second and even more disturbing demonstration was at the river camp, where the captives of the Viet Cong were held in cages partially submerged in rat-infested water until they were dragged out for questioning or to be pawns for gambling. When the latter was the case, two prisoners at a time were hauled to a table above the cages and forced to play a form of Russian Roulette while the Viet Cong guards placed bets on who the winner/loser was to be. There was no regard for anyone or anything. Indeed, they reveled in the anguish inflicted by their "game".

A further extension of this sadistic pleasure was the revelation that Russian Roulette for gambling purposes was not limited to forced participation but was a "sport" voluntarily engaged in by the Vietnamese civilian population as well. Civilians were shown to be accepting of their fate and willing and able to make money from despair. They exploited each other as readily as they exploited the GI. This acceptance was best indicated by the masses of refugees on the move and by the Vietnamese prostitute who took Niko to the room where her baby was crying. It was the only place she was able to earn support and care for her child. Niko was turned into a top-drawing Russian Roulette player by an enterprising local, able to recognize the emotionally damaged personality capable of being

drugged into compliance for the financial benefit of that individual.

The only times when another side of the Vietnamese was shown were far and few between. One of them was when a mother was running through a fire-wracked village with her dying or dead child. Her agony was universal. A second incident was a brief view of a street scene where people were busily engaged in pleasure for however brief a time. The last incident was during the evacuation of Saigon, when people tried their best to become a part of those being removed from the American Embassy. These incidents were too brief to provide a picture of the Vietnamese people as a whole. We were not permitted to see the Vietnamese with a strong cultural heritage. We did not see the way they lived, felt, or interacted with each other in everyday situations. The director presented a one-sided perspective and, as such, the film became an anti-Vietnam propaganda film. Unfortunately, if a person's knowledge of the Vietnamese was dependent upon ***The Deer Hunter***, that person would leave the film with a totally warped perspective of an entire race of people.

While ***Blood of the Condor*** was a propaganda film in its own way, the intent was not as destructive as in ***The Deer Hunter***. The local Indian population was shown, at the start of the film, as ignorant, living in squalor, and dependent upon alcohol for survival. Through flashbacks we were shown that before the arrival of the American medical team and their "assistance," they had been a proud people with a strong cultural heritage to sustain them. Through the infusion of changes made by the medical team, the Indians became disoriented and unable to cope with their changing world. They were a superstitious people who, like the Vietnamese, were accepting of their fate although unaware of what that fate might be. They became a displaced people searching for a place in which to begin life anew, but without that which had sustained them in the past.

As in ***The Deer Hunter***, we were presented a one-sided and incomplete picture of the people and their culture. Their was a definite lack of balance in both films, the difference perhaps, lying in the intent of those making the two films. ***The Deer Hunter*** was more vehement in its apparent anti-Vietnamese attitude (rather than the stated anti-Vietnam war attitude), while ***Blood of the Condor*** was less adamant in its vilification of an entire race of people.

Had there been an interest in presenting a more true perspective of the Vietnamese people and the war conducted on their homeland, there would have been a more fair portrayal of people and incidents. The Americans would not have been the only "good guys" supportive of each other and dismayed by everything they saw. Perhaps they too would have committed atrocities, gone AWOL, or done any of the things which some Americans in the same situations did. At the same time, the Vietnamese (Viet Cong) would not have been only the "bad guys" reveling in misery. Some of the Vietnamese might have shown compassion towards others and a repugnance to what they were being forced to do.

In ***The Deer Hunter*** we were shown the effects of the war (in the push for progress) on three American men, or the influence of the foreign on the American. In ***Blood of the Condor*** we were shown the effects of progress on the local Indians (through the medical team), or the influence of the American on the foreign. The motivation for the interaction of the principal protagonists in the films was diametrically opposed. In ***The Deer Hunter*** it was to fight an enemy; in ***Blood of the Condor*** it was to help a disadvantaged population.

Let it suffice to say that while there are many differences and similarities be-

tween the two films, both are biased and present warped pictures of the people portrayed. The motivation of the writers and directors is evident and, to that extent, determines the validity of the ethnic statements of the films. In this respect, ***Blood of the Condor*** is perhaps a more fair representation of the Quechua Indians and the medical team than is ***The Deer Hunter*** of the Vietnamese and the American GI.

The Deer Hunter and *Mean Streets*

by

Sally T. McAlpin

In this paper I will compare the ethnic portrayals in ***Mean Streets*** and ***The Deer Hunter***. The similarities I will be discussing are those relating to ethnic culture. I will also discuss the differences between the techniques used to convey the same ideas.

The cultural similarities presented in these two films relate Italian Americans and Russian Americans to each other. They also point out things which are lacking in the American culture. By cultural similarities I mean the strong family and friendship ties, the manner of meeting and greeting of people, and religious ties within the two groups. These are some of the customs I feel are lacking in American culture.

Even though both movies used brief scenes to present the same ideas, they used different filmic techniques to achieve the same goal. In ***Mean Streets*** the church and family ties were introduced by Charlie kneeling before the altar, questioning the validity of penance. ***The Deer Hunter***, on the other hand, showed Steve's mother talking to the priest and expressing her concern because Steve's bride, Angie, is getting rounder only around the middle.

These two films introduced the Italian-American and Russian-American ties with the Catholic church by initially shooting a scene in a church setting. I believe that the director's failure to cover religious ceremonies in ***Mean Streets*** indicated a hollow relationship with the church and the Italian group being portrayed. ***The Deer Hunter*** placed more emphasis on formal religious ceremonies. The ties between the church and individual appear to be stronger (possibly more meaningful) in ***The Deer Hunter*** than in ***Mean Streets.***

Both these movies indicate the strong cultural family and friendship ties within these ethnic communities. In ***Mean Streets*** the director depicted family and friendship ties. The scene where Charlie asks Johnny Boy whether or not he likes his grandmother and Johnny Boy replies, "Wat du ya mean, do I like her? She's my grandmother, ain't she?," verbally suggests that a strong cultural family tie exists in this circle of people. Charlie's constant nursing of Johnny Boy shows the strong cultural friendship tie present in most Italian communities.

In ***The Deer Hunter***, the director used the relationship between Michael and Nick to show the strength of their friendship. It was interesting to note that both ethnic groups lauded their war veterans, something which American society has as yet failed to do. The veteran in ***Mean Streets*** was given an American flag and praised for serving in the army. In ***The Deer Hunter*** Michael avoided the formal red, white, and blue welcome-home party prepared for him. However, once he began meeting his friends and neighbors, everyone praised him and talked about his ribbons. I was surprised to see that the only time Michael did not wear his uniform after returning from Vietnam was when he went deer hunting with his buddies.

One of the most profound statements in ***The Deer Hunter*** came in the closing scene. After everyone returns from Nick's funeral, Nick's father begins to sing "America"; the fact that Steve and Michael both sang is not insignificant. It surprised me that these men could sing praise to the country which (indirectly) sub-

jected them to the horrors of war (man's inhumanity to man) in a non-war. This scene acts to erode the stereotype of all Vietnam Vets as resentful and disrespectful of the United States. It may also represent a patriotism to American society which Anglo-Americans do not feel and cannot express.

Mean Streets and ***The Deer Hunter*** both broke the American taboo of physically contacting others in public. This is a custom I wish American society would adopt, for I believe that it might act to break the barrier of isolation which is ingrained in American culture. After seeing the scenes in ***The Deer Hunter*** where people greet each other with brief embraces, I began to realize that this is not merely an Italian custom, but a European custom. In a very broad sense this custom links the European ethnic cultures together. However, the link made by the custom of embracing when greeting does not represent as strongly the relationship between cultural ties and European ethnic groups as do the religious, family, and friendship bonds.

Taken together the cultural ties between the Italian-American and Russian-American ethnic communities not only relate them to each other but also display differences from mainstream American culture. If American society would restrain from rejecting cultural differences in ethnic groups and either adopt or respect these differences, the tensions among ethnic and cultural groups within this society might lessen.

Although those of American society espouse traditional American beliefs, they usually fail to acknowledge their origins. The American Constitutional ideals may be the best example of pseudo-typical American beliefs. The influence of European political philosophers like Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau on American Constitutional values indicates that American values are not originally American. As a result, American culture might be expected to have the most viable atmosphere for cultural diversity. Although cultural diversity does exist in American society, this does not mean that culturally diverse communities do not face opposition. I am not suggesting that American society should alter all of its customs or values. I am suggesting that American society might be strengthened if it could open itself enough to at least accept other culturally diverse groups.

The movie industry reaches thousands of people and may directly affect the perceptions they have of ethnic cultures. This media can be utilized to facilitate acceptance of cultural differences within societies. It is possible that stereotypical images of ethnic groups can be gradually dismantled through the portraits painted in movies. If stereotypical images do deterioriate, it is also possible that fears people harbor about those who are different from themselves may diminish.

Love At First Bite

by

Susan Damon

Love At First Bite is a comedy spoof of Dracula movies as well as a spoof of New York City and its ethnic groups. The humor is created by fitting Dracula, an old-fashioned, Old World, romantic Romanian vampire in a modern North American city like New York. In a sophisticated, sometimes violent city like New York, no-one takes Dracula seriously. This vampire finds he has lost his ability to be scary. Compared with all the thugs and muggers, he seems as tame as a pussy-cat. Dracula also discovers New Yorks multiethnicity. Dracula encounters the black, the Puerto Rican, and a little bit of the New York Jew. These ethnic groups are presented in a different manner from the other six films seen in class. ***Love At First Bite*** is a comedy while the other films were serious. Through comedy the director is making fun of the accepted or the norm stereotype that has been associated with the New York black, Puerto Rican, and Jew. The director has taken these stereotypes and exaggerated them to create humor.

Dracula encounters the New York black first. This black is presented as being very proud, almost arrogant – the black-is-beautiful type. These blacks are also pretty racist toward whites. Dracula discovers that in the U.S., in the eyes of the black community, he is no longer Romanian, but honky.

Dracula is harassed by four black kids, as he walks through a black part of town, because he is white. The old rumor about being white and walking through Harlem became real; this part of town is so hostile that according to one of the black guys, taxi-drivers will not come into the black neighborhood after dark. The notorious crime rate that is associated with Harlem is reinforced in this film. When Dracula sends the last black youth through the window, the kid steals the TV without even thinking. It was an automatic action. The same kid gets arrested for stealing hubcaps and is later shown stealing tires during a black-out.

The black, female judge is the token racist black. She is in a position of power and she kicks the policeman and the psychiatrist out because they are white. She calls them honky. She also represents the new positions that minorities and women are holding because of the civil rights movement. The black pride is emphasized by the frequent references to ***Roots***. The judge talks about her family roots and how her family has come a long way, and she does not want to hear any voodoo about vampires from a white cop. The widow and the kid who steals the TV also make references to ***Roots***.

The black church is also ridiculed. The minister is just another Reverend Ike – all emotionalism. The people of the church are typical stereotypes of the black Baptist with their amens and their hallelujahs. Then the director throws in a stereotype that has not been used in U.S. films for many years. He portrays the black as the cringing, spook-fearing, superstitious type. When Dracula comes out of his coffin, the attendants of the funeral all scream and panic and leave the church. The audience then gets to see the minister's eyes roll around before he jumps out the window.

The two movies we saw in class that dealt with the black ethnic were ***The Other Francisco*** and *No Way Out*. In ***The Other Francisco*** there was not so much black-

white struggle as a slave-capitalist conflict, where the slaves revolted. They did not attack just white, but also black overseers who had oppressed them for personal gain. In *Love At First Bite* and *The Other Francisco*, the blacks have a strong feeling of pride in their African heritage. In one movie we have references to *Roots*, and in the other we have an effort to preserve African ceremonies and religion and a memory of free years in Africa. However, *Love At First Bite* is not a revolutionary film, and it does not deal with rural slaves. It deals with city blacks in the United States.

No Way Out dealt with city blacks, but the blacks in this film differ from those in *Love At First Bite*. Dr. Brooks and the blacks in this film did not really strike me as proud or racist. Dr. Brooks would never speak to a white man like the judge did in *Love At First Bite*. Dr. Brooks tried so hard to please his white associates. When the blacks attacked the Beaver Canal whites, they did so in self-defense, not because they were white or because these whites may have walked alone in this neighborhood. *No Way Out* was made in 1950, and the moviemaker could not show a black man harassing a white man, only a white man harassing a black man. In 1979 you can show black racism as well as white racism. If you showed black racism in the 1950s, the white audience may have torn down the theatre.

We only get a glimpse of the Puerto Rican in *Love At First Bite*. We are shown a family of seven, all crowded into a small apartment. The father is jobless, and his wife pleads with him to go out and find work so that they might buy some food for dinner. When Dracula flies in the window in his bat form, the Puerto Ricans, in their desperately hungry state, think he is a black chicken and try to catch him for dinner. So the Puerto Rican is portrayed as poor, unemployed, and in a desperate condition.

There are only references to the New York Jew. We can assume that most psychiatrists in New York are Jewish, since Dr. Van Helsing changes his name to Dr. Rosenberg for professional reasons. The Jewish clan tendency is included in this movie when the woman in the elevator tells Dr. Rosenberg to forget that blonde shiksa and marry a good Jewish girl. There are also a couple of references to yentai, Jewish matchmakers.

No films seen in class showed the Puerto Rican or Jew, so it is hard to compare their portrayal in this film with portrayals in the other films. I can speak of ethnic portrayals in general terms and compare the way ethnic groups portrayed in this film conformed to their portrayal in other films. The other films do not confront ethnicity directly like in *Love At First Bite*. In the other films ethnicity is developed as a people is portrayed. In *Blood of the Condor* the ethnicity of the highland Indian is developed by following Paulina in her fight to save her husband. In *Love At First Bite* the director has only introduced ethnicity in the form of blatant stereotypes. We do not get an overall picture of a particular ethnic group by following that certain group of people. All we are shown are the extremes of ethnic groups in *Love At First Bite*.

Love At First Bite

by

Ruthanne Williams

Love At First Bite (1979, Kaufmann and Hamilton producers) is basically a modern spoof of Bram Stoker's 1897 novel. This Dracula is thrown out of his castle by the Communist government and comes to America to find his one-and-only love, a rich American covergirl. Although the film is primarily about the Count's adventures in the United States, throughout the story, comments on ethnic groups and their stereotypes are presented.

This film was made for entertainment. It reflects the recent "disco-craze" with its big scene in the discotheque. However, the film's underlying social comments are also entertaining. By exaggerating ethnic stereotypes, ***Love At First Bite*** makes some pointed statements on ethnicity, yet remains humorous.

The fact that the film is a comedy is the main difference between it and the films shown in class. While some of the other films, such as ***Mean Streets***, contained such ignorant racist comments that they became almost comical, their main intent was not comedy. ***The Searchers*** is another example, but one is not sure if Ford was purposely exaggerating stereotypes to parody racism or not. The primary concern of most of the other films was race or class struggle. ***Love At First Bite*** does not deal with either of those conflicts directly.

The film's treatment of blacks reflects some consciousness of racial strife, but only in the lightest sense. The teenage gang members are the best examples. They are typically shown stealing things, like television sets, hub caps, or tires, or accosting strangers on the street. Unlike ***The Other Francisco*** and ***No Way Out***, where blacks are discontented and trying to change their situations, blacks in this film do not seem to be particularly unhappy. In fact, they are almost always smiling. The revival meeting also supports the black stereotype. The only comment made about blacks by the Count comes when he blames Renfield for the dead "schwartz" they have on their hands.

Another ethnic group stereotype parodied in the film is the Jews. Strangely enough, the neurotic psychiatrist with the Jewish surname is not really Jewish at all; he changed his name "for professional reasons." Yiddish words are thrown around such as yenta and goyim. The film even has the classic Jewish matchmaker who tells the psychiatrist, "I have this cousin..." One scene shows an interesting playoff between Judaism and Christianity. The psychiatrist reaches into his shirt while the Count cowers back, and he pulls out...a Star of David, which of course has no effect on a vampire. "Oh", he says, "it's the other one (the Cross) isn't it?" The only other film from class which even touched on Jews was ***Mean Streets***, and in that film there were only passing references.

The covergirl character is a good representation of the rich Anglo. She is spoiled, rich, and very vulgar. This character is reminiscent of the woman Progress Corps member in ***Blood of the Condor***. She does have a little more depth; she seems to use vulgarity to shield herself against people. The film also carries a theme of the goodness of the American (U.S.) way of life. The Communists are represented as cold, impersonal automatons. There is a whole theme of the "foreigner" in the United States. Renfield portrays this concept when he buys a new "American"

suit. This idea that the United States has the best and the most of everything comes up again as the Count and Renfield rob the blood bank. "Only in America," sighs the Count.

Love At First Bite is a U.S. film and, as mentioned above, its primary motive is entertainment and, therefore, profit. However, the film does deal quite a bit with ethnicity. Unlike the class films, it is a light-hearted comedy. By exaggerating the ethnic stereotypes, the film succeeds in making us become more aware of stereotypes and realize their absurdities.

No Way Out and *The Defiant Ones*

by
Michael Álvarez

During the 1950s in the United States of America, symbols of social instability and social significance were becoming intertwined with the movie industry. The movies *No Way Out* and *The Defiant Ones* began what was to be called cinematic emancipation – the freeing of black actors to portray racial conditions that existed during this time period. Sidney Poitier is the black actor who starred in both movies. It is his performance that enabled these movies to be acceptable to the black and white viewing audience.

No Way Out is a social documentary that centered around anti-Semitism and the problems of Negroes in the post-World War II era. The film was made in 1949 and released in 1950. During this time, the U.S. was beginning a transitional phase which included the growing awareness of problems between blacks and whites. Racial issues had not yet reached the Supreme Court and racial distrust was at its lowest point. *The Defiant Ones*, produced in 1958, is along the order of social significance. In this film, Producer Stanley Kramer developed a situation where a black man and white man have escaped from a prison road gang. Mr. Kramer's goal was to show how a brotherhood can develop against the background of hate and prejudice. With the advent of newer camera equipment, Stanley Kramer was able to project and produce *The Defiant Ones* at a level of quality that is much higher than *No Way Out*.

In both movies blacks are presented as the good guys. Most of the racial accusations are directed from white to black. In *No Way Out* there are such examples as: Richard Widmark saying he does not want a "Nigger doctor," whom he had assumed was there to mop the floors; the mother of a riot victim who spits in Poitier's face because he is a black first and a doctor second; or the hospital guard saying "the boogies really did it to the Beavertown people that time." A good example of domestic differences was the portrayal of Poitier's mother's house as one that resembled a white, working-class household. The whites were shown in the delapidated buildings of Beavertown.

The Defiant Ones showed the two escaped convicts slashing at each other with bitter accusations and racial epithets. Joker Jackson would call Noah "Boy" and Noah would call him "Honky". From the first time they are able to sit and talk to each other, Poitier begins to play the good guy role by saying that he does not see any point in calling each other names.

In both movies the whites were always shown as an emotional and irresponsible group. In *No Way Out*, a gang of white militants are getting ready to fight the blacks, only because they hear a story about a black doctor killing off their friends. They never check to find out if the story is true; they let their prejudices decide for them. There is one scene that shows a white man getting some morbid pleasure from striking a metal can with a chain that is to be used on the blacks. In *The Defiant Ones*, the white group is emotional because it caught the two convicts trying to steal goods from their company store. They want to burn the eyes out of Cullen but they are stopped. In this scene, Sidney Poitier returns the spit he got in *No Way Out* by spitting at one of the militants, a daring scene for its time.

Although both movies have white gangs, the climaxes are different. In *No Way Out*, the blacks dispel the "lazy" myth by organizing and winning their battle with the whites; in *The Defiant Ones*, Jackson and Cullen are saved by a former chain gang member. The former chain gang member is played by Lon Chaney, Jr., a good choice for this part because he is respected and feared by the white group and because he has the physical looks of a man who can do bodily damage.

The message in *No Way Out* is best portrayed by the young white girl in the film. She is a person who is in the transition stage. Like the U.S. at this time, the transition was in the form of questioning the social values of whites and questioning the treatment of blacks. White men are shown as tricking her and taking advantage of her association with Poitier in order to start a race riot and to set up Poitier for murder.

While the blacks are shown as trying to help her, the hospital Chief of Staff's housekeeper, who is black, talks to her in such a manner that shows the young white girl that they are alike in that they spend their free time in much the same way. Poitier wants to help her by finding out who really killed her husband, and Poitier's wife is shown as a woman who cares very much about her family and husband. Poitier's mother is shown as owning a middle-class home and baking him an All-American Apple Pie.

The message in *The Defiant Ones* is one of brotherhood able to unfold against the background of hate and prejudice. The four-foot handcuff chain linking Noah and Joker by their wrists was their first common bond; the second was their desire to be free. Their brotherhood begins where they must work together to get out of a muddy and deep pit, then to cross a raging river, and, finally, to escape from a company town where they have been captured. Through their teamwork they are able to survive these adventures and also are able to get food to eat.

When Joker discovers that Noah has been tricked into crossing a swamp with quicksand, he realizes that, although the chain no longer bind them together, there still is a strong bond between them. Joker searches for Noah, and the goal of the movie is complete as the chain which bound fugitives together ended up binding human beings together. Noah shows that he is aware of this bond in the scene where they are walking toward the train and Joker, who has been shot, says he cannot make it any longer. Because they are not physically chained together Poitier says, "You're dragging on the chain," which means that they must make it together.

Both movies end in a similar fashion, with the black actor in the position of superiority. In *No Way Out*, Richard Widmark has just shot Sidney Poitier, but Poitier still manages to save Widmark's life by stopping him from bleeding to death. In the final scene, Poitier cradles Widmark, who is crying, in his arms, and says "Don't cry, white boy, you're gonna live." In *The Defiant Ones*, they have just fallen off the train, and Poitier again cradles a white man in his arms (this time, Tony Curtis, who is wounded) and says: "We gave them a hell of a run for it."

The camera techniques in *The Defiant Ones* were much better than in *No Way Out*. The fading from one scene to the next was smoother and made the plot much easier to follow than in *No Way Out*, where the cut-motion frames were used to show time, flashback, or emotion. Both films used "advancing the plot" speeches. In *No Way Out*, Brooks' wife does a speech on social attributes, while Poitier and Curtis in *The Defiant Ones* advance the plot by a series of short speeches on social conditions of their time. *The Defiant Ones* I also preferred to *No Way Out* because it was produced on location rather than in a studio.

No Way Out and *To Kill a Mockingbird*

by

Jon Bumps

To Kill a Mockingbird concerns a lawyer named Atticus and his two children, Scout and Jem. The time is in the early thirties. The family lives in a small southern town. Their neighbors have a slightly retarded son, a mysterious figure called Boo Radley.

Atticus is asked to defend a black man named Tom Robinson, who has been accused of raping a white girl. The evidence is clear that Tom is innocent. Atticus tries to prove that perhaps Bob Ewell beat up his girl and is trying to put the blame on Tom. Atticus makes a grand final speech in which he relates how hard Tom works and how he has never asked for any special favors, but the all-white jury finds Tom guilty. As Tom is being taken away, he makes a break. The deputy tries to stop him and accidentally kills him. It is a sad day for Atticus and the black community.

Life continues for Atticus and his children. One night, on their way home from school, the children are attacked by Bob Ewell. At the last moment Boo Radley saves them. The story ends with an interesting analogy to the title.

I found this film similar to *No Way Out* in its message and also in its character's basic traits. But this film did not bring out the racial issue as much as *No Way Out* did and, therefore, was not as controversial to viewers. Its message was that blacks deserve equality. This is similar to many movies seen in class and especially to *No Way Out*. But the director chose a subtler way of relating this message. He did not say that the blacks deserve equality because they are equal. Instead he said that blacks deserve equality because they have earned it, because of all their hard work.

This manner of relating the message helped sell the film. Instead of making a statement that might offend some viewers, the director chose a manner that people could accept or not accept. In *No Way Out* the statement was too blatant for the audience of the day, which led to critical reviews and lack of acceptance. The audience had a choice in ***To Kill a Mockingbird*** and, therefore, did not feel pressed upon.

The title is very enchanting. The father tells his son not to kill mockingbirds since they do no harm to anyone. All they do is sing all day for people's enjoyment. At the end, the father tells his little girl that if they told people how Boo Radley had saved them it would be like killing the mockingbird. It would be harming something that helps you.

This is the analogy that the viewer is shown. But wrapped inside the story is yet another analogy with the mockingbird. All Tom Robinson ever did was help people. But now because he has been accused of raping a white girl everyone wants him dead. This analogy is not brought out as much as the ending analogy; therefore, the viewer has to look for it.

The title is similar in meaning to *No Way Out*. It is an opposite meaning. There was a way out if you worked at it and you should not kill a mockingbird. The other film titles had a meaning similar to the film.

The characters of *No Way Out* and ***To Kill a Mockingbird*** had some similar

characteristics. Both bigots, Ray Biddle and Bob Ewell, were poor and uneducated. Their prejudice was attributed to their ignorance. At the other end were the main supporters of blacks–the hospital head doctor and Atticus the lawyer, both educated because of their professions. The blacks in both films were portrayed as honest and hard-working people.

Another similarity between these two films was the fact that they were both in black and white, although ***To Kill a Mockingbird*** was made twelve years later, in 1962, when most films were in color. Perhaps the reason for black-and-white film was to denote the racial issue subtly, to give the feeling of earlier times, or for both of these reasons.

Most films in the class were seen through the eyes of the main characters. This led to a prejudiced view of matters in the films. But in ***To Kill a Mockingbird***, the issues were seen from the children's viewpoint. This led to an almost unbiased view of matters. It gave the viewer more of a chance to think for himself. Unlike in ***No Way Out***, the director of this film used a convincing method to explain situations. Atticus would explain something to his children. It made a lot more sense than having a man's wife talk to him while he was sleeping.

To Kill a Mockingbird had a different goal from some of the class films. The class films wanted to tell the viewers something and have them believe it. This film gave a good reason for something and left the viewer a choice. I feel this is why it succeeded so much. The choice given the viewers is simple. They can see Boo Radley as the mockingbird and accept those people who are less fortunate than themselves or they can see Tom Robinson as the mockingbird and accept those people who are racially different from themselves. Viewers can even accept both of these mockingbirds. But any way they choose, the choice is theirs.

No Way Out and *An Apple, An Orange*

by

Myron Berry

I intend to compare and analyze *No Way Out*, with *An Apple, An Orange*. The two films are similar in their use of ethnicity as a guiding force toward social mobility. The characters are from the same social class and share characteristics of social mobility. The ethnic flavor in *No Way Out* encompasses the interactions between lower-class blacks and whites. The exception is Dr. Brooks, the only non-white intern in a large metropolitan hospital. *An Apple, An Orange* is a sensitive relationship of two domestic immigrants – One Asian, one Dutch – who share a home and an existence in urban America.

The two characters are women in their fifties. Rose, the Dutch character, is a huge, rugged woman who feels that she is as strong as two women and stronger than any man. She works hard and feels that all women should do the same. Her occupational status is that of a cleaning lady, who scrubs floors. She is a simple woman, who believes that one should prepare and have a plan for the future, is very stubborn, and does not yield to conformity. Once married, Rose is now separated. She hopes some day to acquire two hundred dollars in order to divorce her husband.

Ana is from China. A petite woman, she believes her presence in the states is for a reason, a purpose. She has always lived with and taken care of her immediate family, maintaining a dream that some day her time will come for her to fulfill her purpose. Her goal is to leave home, go to school in America, and acquire a decent source of employment and income. She has never been married and has never experienced romantic love.

Upon her arrival, Ana encounters Rose's daughter. She makes their acquaintance and sets up refuge in Rose's humble abode. Rose inquires about Ana's financial status, and is informed that Ana has come equipped with five hundred dollars.

During an interim period, Ana is questioned about her plans, Ana informs Rose of the good news about her enrollment in business school. The cost was two hundred dollars and, upon graduation, the school guarantees her an office job. Rose, who feels that school is a waste and is just taking her money, has a fit because Ana should not be wasting time or money on any school. She is too old for school and office work and calls her stupid. Rose remarks that she could use the two hundred dollars for her divorce.

As time goes on, Ana runs out of money and becomes totally dependent upon Rose. Rose becomes livid and attributes the problem to lack of preparation. Ana pleads for more time, but it is all for naught. They have numerous arguments, and Rose offers a possible solution. She suggests that Ana go to work in her place. She can earn twenty dollars for remuneration, to uphold her end of the arrangement. Ana refuses because her purpose is to complete her schooling, not to scrub floors. Rose does not care, for bills are due and they are not getting paid through friendship. As a result, Rose arranges a live-in cleaning job and sunders their friendship prior to Ana's graduation.

I see Rose as a believer in ethocentrism and Ana as a believer in cultural relativity. Rose constantly calls Ana stupid, and feels that her country is backwards.

Ana's way of life is totally incomprehensible to Rose.

Ana and Dr. Brooks share a common existence. They have a purpose in life – to achieve mobility through education, determination, and hard work. All their lives they have had to work hard and overcome adversities. Dr. Brooks, because of racial pressures and social stigma, had to be the best in his class. Ana, because she is an elderly Chinese immigrant, has to overcome Rose's negativism and derision from her classmates. Even still, Ana becomes the best in her class.

Rose and Ray Biddle portray the antagonists. The two characters are simple; they enjoy disparaging others and possess ethnocentrism. Rose feels that her way of life is or should be the way for all women. She becomes stagnant to those not cognizant of her own beliefs. Ray Biddle is totally antithetical to black achievement, to black people, and to Edie, for moving out of Beaver Canal. A spark of jealousy ignites Rose and Ray's adversity to those around them who make a serious attempt to better themselves. They feel that society has overlooked their dreams and aspirations. As a result they have to lash back at those who reap the benefits of American society, negating the fact that achievement and progress come about through hard work and determination.

The filmmakers made a veracious attempt at coupling ignorance with ethnic prejudice. The films convey to the audience that, despite the existence of ethnic prejudice, socioeconomic mobility can be achieved. Dr. Brooks portrays the plight from a black perspective, and Ana portrays the plight from an elderly Chinese woman's perspective. Dr. Brooks and Ana are bona fide disciples of the American way. Hard work and determination are the preparation for a purpose, and the reward is overt success.

The Other Francisco

by

Susan Gregory

The Other Francisco, a film by the Cuban director, Sergio Giral, is based on Cuba's first abolitionist novel, ***Francisco***, written in 1839 by Anselmo Suárez y Romero. The film is actually a dual account of nineteenth-century slavery. The first part is a dramatization of the nineteenth-century novel. The second part, as the title of the film indicates, is the story of the other Francisco, a Francisco whose story, upon re-examination of the history of the period, may well be a more accurate representation of the slave experience on the Cuban sugar plantations. This "re-reading" of the novel, presented filmically, attempts to re-examine the nineteenth-century sugar hacienda, analyzing the economic laws of sugar production, the world market, and the role of class antagonisms in an effort to contrast the novel's romantic, idealized portrayal of slavery to actual (from a historical materialist perspective) historical conditions. Giral's film, then, sets up two interpretations of history, two different aesthetic styles, and among many important aspects of the film, two different views of the ethnicity of the Afro-Cuban slave.

Part I of the film is primarily a dramatization of the original novel. It immediately draws the viewer into the impassioned and tragic love story of two slaves, Francisco and Dorotea. They are prevented from marrying by the carnal desires of the young master of the plantation, who forced Dorotea to submit to him by systematically martyrizing Francisco. The story culminates in the violation of Dorotea by her master and the final parting of the two lovers. Francisco hangs himself in despair, and Dorotea wastes away and dies several years later.

This book was written, on commission from an Englishman, as a literary document against slavery, and at the time it remained unpublished because of its abolitionist stance. However, as the film shows us by introducing us into the drawing room of the Del Monte Circle and through "interviews" with Suárez and Del Monte and interventions of the narrator, this book was written with the purpose of portraying the evils of slavery in order to exert pressure for the abolition of slavery in Cuba. The narrator suggests, and it is corroborated through the interviews, that the real intent of the novel and of the group in which it was circulated was not philanthropic in nature, but represented the interests of the Cuban bourgeoisie and British capital in transforming Cuba from an economy based on slave labor to one based on wage labor.

Thus ***Francisco*** was primarily a liberal bourgeois interpretation of slavery which, as the author himself admits, presents a distorted view of the slave and therefore of the slave's ethnicity. Francisco was portrayed as possessing the ultimate positive characteristics that a black slave could have in the eyes of the white population. That is, he was passive, tame, hard-working, loyal, and humble; the slave's worth was measured in his utility to his white masters. The novel is not concerned with portraying the slave in any of his socio-cultural manifestations, but in many ways falsifies his ethnicity in order to convince the creole population that Cuba would not be "another Haiti," that the slave was human and essentially manageable.

However, the narrator asks, was this the real nature of slavery and of the slave?

The camera zooms out at this point, focusing on the collective rather than the individual, on the laboring of the slaves rather than the love story of Part I. The viewer is exposed to a graphic retelling of the story of Francisco and Dorotea set in the context of the slave economy of the Cuban sugar hacienda. In this part the love story is of secondary importance to the economic life of the plantation. Gone are the soft filter shots, the zoom to close-up shots, the melodramatic music, and the conventional plot of the amorous triangle. The camera zooms out, high contrast film is used, and the hand-held camera gives the feeling of documentary footage. The music is that of African drums and chants of slaves in the fields. The story of the "other Francisco" not only re-evaluates the validity of the liberal interpretation of the slave experience, but also is a study of the culture of the Afro-Cuban slave. This film can be seen as an exploration and affirmation of the ethnic heritage of the black population of Cuba and at the same time a recognition that this heritage cannot be separated from its socio-economic context – the development of Cuban plantation agriculture and the institution of slavery.

The film researches and analyzes the economic life of the plantation and the African heritage of the slaves who work on that plantation: their music, dances, religious ceremonies, speech patterns, and ties to the African homeland (the majority of Cuban slaves were African by birth, as Cubans did not "breed" slaves as was done in the North American colonies). All this is not just a touch of folklore typical of some ethnographic films. The black slaves' expression of their ethnic heritage, through such means as their music, their dance, and their religion, sustains the group, giving the slaves a feeling of unity, of collectivity, and becomes a form of self-affirmation in a social environment totally hostile to them.

The expression of popular culture in a situation where that group is suppressed by the dominant culture becomes a rallying point and an expression of resistance. (We have seen this recently in Chile, where the junta has outlawed the playing of indigenous instruments.) In ***The Other Francisco***, this is evident and particularly impressive in the scenes around the bonfire in the slave camp, where Andres Lucumi dances and wields a machete, the one instrument of resistance the slaves possessed, accompanied by the clapping and chanting of the group. The call for solidarity, that Yoruba unite with Congo, is consecrated by the religious sacrifice of the chicken. The soundtrack of pounding drums strongly reaffirms the slaves' African heritage and the potential explosiveness of the situation. The film seems to be making a strong comment that in addition to the cultural tradition of the Afro-Cuban slave, resistance is an important part of popular culture. Resistance was manifested in their assertion of their traditional religion, music, and dances, as well as by sabotage, attempts at escape, and ultimately rebellion. Resistance was the slaves' response to the inhuman conditions of their existence and an act of self-affirmation against individuals and a society which denied them their very humanity.

The story of the Afro-Cuban slave on the sugar plantation is not just that of an ethnic group but of Cuban society. Sugar and slave labor were the pillars of Cuban society of the time. The history of the black experience in Cuba is that of the Cuban nation itself.

The Other Francisco would seem to be an attempt by the Cuban revolutionary society to re-evaluate its past according to its new-found values in order to establish its identity, long distorted by its colonial and neo-colonial experience. Since the Revolution, interest in and appreciation of Cuba's Afro-Cuban heritage have in-

creased. The Afro-Cuban contribution to Cuba's music, dance, art, and song are widely recognized as being part of the national Cuban culture. The Revolution has made efforts to structurally integrate the black and his ethnic heritage into Cuban society. This is a very important point for analyzing *The Other Francisco's* portrayal of the Afro-Cuban ethnic group and for analyzing why this particular type of portrayal was chosen by the government-controlled Cuban film institute (ICAIC).

By way of contrast, in the United States, blacks have been denied entry into the mainstream of American life. Their labor is exploited, yet the dominant Anglo culture does not recognize their ethnicity nor the part that Afro-Americans have played in the very formation of this nation (with obvious exceptions like jazz). With the blacks' struggle for civil rights in the 1960s, it became clear that blacks were not going to be integrated into the American way of life through assimilation, but rather by challenging the system through their active organizing and appeal for unity as an ethnic group as well as a pride in their ethnicity.

In Cuba, the structural barriers have been abolished (this is not to say that residual prejudices may not remain), and the task facing Cubans is to create unity and a sense of collective spirit in order to make the revolutionary transformation of society a reality and to protect the Revolution from counter-revolutionary forces. The Cuban leadership wants the people to identify first as Cubans rather than first as an ethnic group. For example, you would not have "Black Power" or a separatist movement. It is felt that the needs of Cuban blacks as well as those of the rest of the Cuban population are being met through the Revolution. This does not mean a denial of Afro-Cuban ethnicity, but it signifies a different way of acknowledging and integrating this ethnic group into national political, economic, social, and cultural life. One way of doing this, which is the case of the film, is to look at the ethnic group in a historical context and thereby arrive at a reappraisal of the role of blacks in Cuba's national heritage.

In the film, *The Other Francisco*, Afro-Cuban ethnicity is viewed more in terms of the black ethnic group as a class than being of a particular genetic makeup. The slaves rise up as a class united by their ethnic heritage (such as their traditional religion and music) and by their class interests, the primary one being freedom from the oppression of the slavemasters. Further, it was only through collective action that victory could be achieved. Thus, while addressing the question of black ethnic heritage, the film also conveys a very important contemporary message of class consciousness and solidarity aimed at the contemporary Cuban audience.

Born Yesterday

by

Pamela Duncan

The film I chose for viewing outside of class is the 1950 classic, ***Born Yesterday***, directed by George Cukor. Although this film would seem an unlikely choice for an analysis of ethnicity, I felt that it would be interesting to review for comparative purposes, for ***Born Yesterday*** is a definite contrast to the films viewed in class.

First, it is a comedy, which is totally unlike those screened in class. Although there were some humorous parts in a few of the films, such as ***The Searchers*** and ***Mean Streets***, none of these pictures could be called comedies. ***Born Yesterday***, on the other hand, was made purely for enjoyment. Very briefly, it is a sort of testimony to the value of an education. The chief characters are: Harry Brock, a wealthy, undereducated gangster type who thinks he can buy anything; his girlfriend, Billy Dawn, an ex-chorus girl who is even more ignorant than Brock; and Paul Beryl, the idealistic young Washington journalist whom Brock hires to educate her. Brock regrets this move, however, when Beryl educates her in subjects such as the value of democracy and the dangers of corruption. In the end, Billy effectively blocks Brock's move to form a cartel and marches off to marry Beryl. While the class films were primarily dramas that were sometimes sprinkled with a touch of humor, ***Born Yesterday*** was a comedy throughout, with perhaps only three dramatic scenes.

Furthermore, unlike the class films, ***Born Yesterday*** carried no conscious statement of ethnicity. With the possible exception of ***The Searchers***, which was primarily an adventure and a depiction of the Old West legend, all of the films seen in class had a very specific and conscious message about ethnicity. However, I believe that nothing could have been further from Cukor's mind. This is not to say that ***Born Yesterday*** did not portray an ethnic message to the alert observer, I just do not believe that this statement was the result of any conscious effort on Cukor's part.

Secondly, ***Born Yesterday*** did not provide any comparisons or contrasts between different ethnic groups. This element was present in almost all of the class films. For example, ***The Other Francisco*** showed a contrast between blacks, Cubans, and Western capitalists; ***The Searchers*** depicted many different ethnic groups, including Indian, Scandinavian, and Mexican; and ***Blood of the Condor*** portrayed Bolivian Indians, Latin Bolivians, and North Americans. Only in ***Mean Streets***, it seemed to me, did the filmmaker stick closely to only one ethnic group.

This is precisely what Cukor did in ***Born Yesterday***. To watch this film, one would think that the whole world was white. All of the major characters were white; in addition, there were white maids, white bellboys, white barbers, and white policemen. Only twice did a black face appear on the screen – one was a shoeshiner and the other an elevator operator. From this I was tempted to draw the very general conclusion that, according to Cukor, although whites could be shown in menial jobs, there were some for which they were just too good, and blacks were entitled to those. But then Billy mentioned that her father was an elevator operator; as a result, this theory appeared weak and vague to me. In contrast to most of the class films, then, ***Born Yesterday*** portrayed only one ethnic group; no comparisons or contrasts were presented. It is not clear why Cukor stayed so close to white ethnic-

ity. I personally interpreted the film as a sort of class statement. If it was, perhaps Cukor felt that casting people of different ethnic groups would obstruct his purpose by drawing attention to racial, rather than class, differences.

The idea of class leads to the third point of comparison. This film depicted a wide array of subgroups within the Anglo category. First, there were the very wealthy, all of whom were made to look corrupt and foolish. Take, for example, Harry Brock, the epitome of the bumbling gangster, and a white-haired, high-class Congressman named Hedges, who made high-flown speeches about justice, but was secretly in the pay of Brock. These two were not, to be sure, the most flattering representatives of the upper class; I think that this was intentional. At the other extreme were the working-class whites. There were a great many of these people surrounding Brock–calling his cabs, making his bed, and fixing his drinks. They looked foolish, but not nearly so much as did the upper class. I think that Cukor was attempting to portray them as the victimized workers, striving to please, but all the while being yelled at, ordered around, and actually physically abused by the wealthy.

The only characters who really looked good were the middle class – independent, white-collar workers, represented by Paul Beryl. Intellectual, idealistic, and actively involved in stamping out corruption, this class was portrayed as the undoubtable hero; Beryl himself was almost too good to be true. Billy, it seemed to me, was the personification of the class struggle: raised in a lower class family, she was lured away by the temptation of Brock's riches. But, under Beryl's tutelage, she chose to join the middle class and its fight against the crimes of the wealthy. In Billy herself, as in the plot, the side for right and justice won out. If this seems a bit sentimental and simplistic, it is important to remember when the film was made.

Cukor, then, focused upon Anglo-Saxon ethnicity. Within this ethnic group was a diverse combination of subgroups. In comparing this with the films viewed in class, I find that some of them also depicted a variety of "types" within one ethnic group. For example, ***No Way Out*** showed a very clear distinction between the riotous lower-class blacks and the dignified Sidney Poitier character. In ***Mean Streets***, although all urban Italian Americans were portrayed as criminals, some definite differences in language and gesture made it very clear who was in the upper echelon and who was not. On the other hand, we did see some films where all people of a certain ethnic group were more or less clumped together. For example, in ***Blood of the Condor***, all North Americans were wealthy and shallow, all Latin Bolivians were violently anti-Indian, and all mountain Indians had a certain passive, religious quality. In this portrayal of subgroups, then, ***Born Yesterday*** was not totally in contrast to all of the films seen in class.

Regarding the technical aspect of the film it is difficult to draw general conclusions. Since it was only a lighthearted comedy, there was little symbolism denoted in the photography. However, several times there were long distance shots of Billy and Beryl, dwarfed in front of a building such as the Capitol, symbolizing the grandness of the democratic system. It was, in a way, similar to some of the photography of riders dwarfed by mountains in ***The Searchers***. However, being in black and white, it lacked the dramatic symbolism of the colors used in that film. Cukor apparently did not use the hand camera at all, in contrast to the technique used in ***The Other Francisco***, ***Mean Streets***, and ***Blood of the Condor***. And the music in ***Born Yesterday*** was so low key that I honestly do not even remember it; contrast this to the bold, accentuating music in ***The Searchers*** and ***Mean Streets***.

Born Yesterday, then, provided an interesting contrast to the films seen in class. Being a comedy, it made no conscious ethnic statement. It dealt exclusively with people in the Anglo-Saxon category, portraying several different types within that ethnic group. Only this characteristic did it share with a substantial number of class films. I think that the very fact that one can see a classic comedy like *Born Yesterday* from an ethnic point of view proves that, to a keen observer, every film is a picture of ethnicity.